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IN FOCUS

SHANMUKHA

While bidding adieu to this Millennium SHANMUKHA wishes its Readers, Contributors, Subscribers and Advertisers a very Happy Diwali.

This issue contains many thought-provoking, incisive articles, historical and informative write-ups etc.

Shringara Rasa Bhava in Tyagaraja Kritis ? Why not ? Is the 'Rasa Raja' taboo to Sanyasis? Can't they rise above Tamasic to a Satvic level? Could the concept be not "dignified if not divine, encompassing emotive expressions"? A topic that has been intriguing many a modern scholar and researcher is discussed threadbare by a scholar-composer.

Music and Musicians forms a general theme of three articles; one peeps into the great philosophy of Music as Moksha Sadhana, as envisioned by Saint Tyagaraja; the other analyses performer - listener categories pinpointing the responsibility of the former to educate the latter in music; yet another deplores the state of classical music today - aggressive, explosive and loud, seeking a solution in treading the path of tradition.

"The rare human that she was" representing not only a great style of music but also a great way of life". That is an ideal tribute a disciple, himself a musical genius, pays to 'Brindamma' on her third Punya Thithi.

There is a son's salutation too to his father who was a "Gentle Vaggeyakara".

"A soul, individual or national, can express its inner nature best through fine arts and in its wonderful Raga system and in the intensely individualistic attitude of musical expression", one finds "the essential otherworldliness and belief in the Divinity of man so characteristic of Indian Culture". That in a nutshell sums up the essay, "The Inner Aspect of Indian Music", by a versatile professor who had a passion for 3 Ms - mathematics, music and mysticism."

Musiri's saga continues.

A tete-a-tete with the Sangita Kalanidhi - elect for 1999 and a report on the workshop on "Raga Swaroopam" he conducted adds a new dimension to this issue.

How rich and instructive are our rural entertainments? Read the historical essay on the subject focusing on Maharashtra.

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Shringara Rasa Anubhava in Compositions of Tyagaraja

by Dr. V. V. Srivatsa

Karnatak Music is a synthesis of Bhava, Raga and Tala. The Bhava facet encompasses emotive operation. Experience of emotions is called Rasa-Anubhava. Bharata, in *Natya Shastra* refers to eight Rasas - Shringara, Veera, Karunya, Adbhuta, Hasya, Bhayaanaka, Vibhatsa and Roudra, omitting Shanta Rasa - the mental state of equanimity or quietude. However, Abhinavagupta, a commentator of Bharata's *Natya Shastra*, strongly advocated the inclusion and supremacy of Shanta Rasa, to make it Nava-Rasa, as conclusively proved in a Shloka of the *Rama Karnaamruta* :

" Shringaaram kshitinandini viharane
veeram dhanur bhanjane !
kaarunyam bali bhojane adbhuta rasam
sindhow giristhaapane
Haasyam Shoorpanakhaa mukhe
bhayavaham veebhatsam anyaa mukhe
Roudram Ravanamardanam muni janeh
shaantam vapuh paatunaha."

Bhakti or devotion permits room for emotions. Bhakti is a compendium of Rasas, not a Rasa by itself. The study of Rasa-Anubhava in Bhakti is nothing new. We have at our disposal, the topical analysis and concordance of the Bhagavata-Purana by Bopadeva, through his works titled *Bhagavata-Mukta Phala* and *Harileela*. The Rasa-oriented elaboration of Bhakti reached the zenith at the hands of Roopa Goswami, in his works, "*Bhakti Rasaamruta Sindhu*" and *Ujjwalaneelamani*. We must mention the contribution of the Vaghela king, Vishwanatha Simha, in similar lines, for the propagation of Rama-Bhakti.

Bhakti is not an amorphous jelly. Bhakti is one of the three yogas to attain salvation and is equated with Gnana-yoga and Karma-Yoga. Gnana-Yoga purifies and hones the intellect; Karma Yoga purifies and consolidates will power;

Bhakti-Yoga fine-tunes emotions. Note that the three mental functions are intellect, will and emotion. In the states of absolute maturity, these three yogas merge into one another. The best example of such a state of maturity is Narada, who is a case of three-in-one, who is a Gnani, Yogi and a Bhakta par-excellence. Narada is the author of *Bhakti-Sutra*, a collection of aphorisms, which thoroughly analyse Bhakti and allied Rasa Anubhavas. In Sutra No.82, Narada defines manifestations of Bhakti and cites eleven forms:

- (1) *Guna-Maahatmya Aasakti* (Love of God's Divine qualities)
- (2) *Roopa-Aasakti* (Love of this enchanting beauty)
- (3) *Pooja-Aasakti* (Love of Lord's worship)
- (4) *Smarana - Aasakti* (Love of remembrance and association)
- (5) *Daasya - Aasakti* (Love of service to Lord)
- (6) *Sakhya - Aasakti* (Love of his companionship/ friendship)
- (7) *Vaatsalya - Aasakti* (Love of the Lord as a Child)
- (8) *Kaanta-Aasakti* (Love of the Lord as a Husband)
- (9) *Aatma - Nivedana - Aasakti* (Love of self-surrender to the Lord)
- (10) *Tanmayataa-Aasakti* (Love of absolute absorption in Him)
- (11) *Parama-Viraha-Aasakti* (Love of the state of separation from Him)

Bhakti with multiple manifestations, is a many-splendoured thing, like the April rose that grows in the early spring; It is the golden crown that makes a man a king. Bhakti, Divine Love, is not a monolith. It has some states, which are lucidly defined by Narada in twenty four Sutras. The incipient or nascent state is "*Gauna-Bhakti*", where there exists difference between the worshipper and the Worshipped to a significant extent. The next stage is "*Raagaanugabhakti*", characterised by an attachment which cannot be succinctly defined.

The second-stage is a prematurity stage. These two stages are combined to be called

"Aparaabhakti". "Aparaabhakti" is the lower strata of the edifice of Devotion. A highly advanced stage, the third, is called *Ekanta - Bhakti* - a stage where all apparent objects cease to matter to the worshipper and the only object that matters is the object of worship, a state which supervenes upon the fulfilment of duties on the novitiate, when Divine grace will be bestowed on the worshipper. Recall the fervent pleas by Purandaradasa, "*Shrikaanta enagishtu daya mado, ninna ekaantadali bhajisuva sowbhagya*". The last state is "*Raga-Bhakti*," when Divine illumination is imminent and inevitable. The third and fourth stages are jointly termed as "*Paraabhakti*".

Sankaracharya dwells at length at the "*Saadhana - Sampat*" (wealth of action) characterising a Bhakta. Ramanujacharya states that seven are the traits of a true Bhakta-Viveka (discrimination), *Vimoka* (detachment), *Abhyaasa* (Practice), *Kriya* (good deeds), *Kalyana* (purity in thought and deed), *Anvasaada* (Cheerfulness) and *Anudharsha* (absence of excessive hilarity). Bhakti, thus, allows scope for many mental states and for variegated emotions. A Bhakta will certainly exhibit a multiplicity of emotions. Steady thoughts regulated by Shanta-Rasa are called *Sthaayi Bhavas*. Varying ambitions are *Sanchari Bhavas*, classified into thirty three groups - like *Nirveda* (despondency), *Glaani* (fatigue), *Shankha* (suspicion), *Asooya* (jealousy), *Mada* (intoxication) and so on.

Shringara Rasa, basically, is appreciation of beauty. Such appreciation can be *Aangika* (through limbs), *Vaachika* (through words), *Darshita* (by sight) and *Shrunva* (through hearing). Shringara Rasa is such that *Sanchari Bhavas* dominate. When *Sthaayi Bhavas* take over Shringara Rasa is sublimated, Shringara Rasa is of three types :

- 1) *Saatwika* : (Appreciation of beauty only for beauty's sake, without any self-interest)

2) *Raajasa* (A momentary or ephemeral surge, which fades away fast, usually on attaining some short-term self interest)

3) *Taamasa* (A state where carnal desires dominate and the intellect is subservient to the organs).

It is totally erroneous to equate Shringara Rasa with erotica. Undeniably, there is an erotic element in Shringara Rasa but there is ample poise, grace and dignity in this Rasa, as well. Fie unto those who seek lust or passion only in Shringara Rasa - they only exhibit their depraved mental state. Is not a thing of beauty, a joy for ever ?

Shringara Rasa can be discerned in Bhava, in Bhakti. Tyagarajaswami, was a Bhakta and axiomatically, elements of Shringara Rasa can be discerned in his compositions. Shringara Rasa dominates the Kritis of His Geya-Nataka, "*Nowka Charitra*". Nevertheless, we can perceive several strokes of Shringara Rasa in other compositions, as well. One scholar opines :

"In the general run of his Kritis, Tyagaraja has not candidly portrayed Shringara Rasa anywhere, perhaps because he thought he had exhausted the quota in *Nowka Charitra*".

If there ever could be a total terminology of inexactitude, it is this observation, reflective of the abnormal attitude and of inadequacy of appreciation of the real Tyagaraja. They are but pretenders, the Bakas and Bekas on the Paramananda Kamala.

The object of this presentation is to assess the element of Shringara Rasa in the compositions of Tyagaraja. Let us pause for a moment and reassure ourselves that there is no thematic incongruence: it is not a case of Ghulam Kadar and Gokulashtami. How can there be Shringara Rasa in the outpourings of a Bhakta, that too, when he was a Sanyasi? For Shringara Rasa, look to the *Geeta-Govinda*, the Ashtapadis of Jayadeva, a grihasta, a householder - so say some.

Shringara Rasa dominates the compositions of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Roopa Goswami, staunch Adwaitins like Madhusudhana Saraswati and Narayana Teertha - all of whom were Sanyasins. Who said that Shringara Rasa was taboo to Sanyasins? Here again, misconceptions dominate. The Rasa-Anubhava of Shringara Rasa by Sanyasis and intellectuals will be satwic in nature, while those of grihastas are prone to be Tamasic. Tyagaraja was a Sanyasi, after being a grihasta. Is he barred from Anubhava of Shringara Rasa? What is the "Quota" the scholar (whose observation was cited earlier) refers to? Satvika Shringara has no "quota" - "quotas" come in only in Rajasic or Tamasic Shringara. One prime object of this presentation is to disprove the unwarranted comments of the pseudo-scholar.

The yard-stick employed for evaluation of the Shringara Rasa content are the Aasaktis defined by Narada, enumerated earlier. Compositions with just a cursory or casual reference to the Shringara element are not counted; there should be a cognisable passage. Adopting this norm we have culled out about 90 compositions of Tyagaraja with a finite content of Shringara Rasa - this Rasa having been defined earlier, as well. The content and impact are profound in the *Nowka Charitra* group of songs, only nine of which are included. The break-up of our selection is:

Kshetradana Kritis	02
Divyanama Sankeertanas	19
Prahlada Bhakti Vijaya	07
Utsava Sampradaya	03
	<hr/>
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The remaining 59 Kritis are from his general compositions. Ab-initio, quantitatively, the number of Shringara-Rasa oriented general Kritis surpasses the number found in *Nowka Charitra*.

We have not accorded much importance to *Guna-Maahatmya* and commence with *Roopa Aasakti*. The aesthetic qualities of Rama are

"*Roopamu, prataapamu, shara chaapamu, sallaapamu*" (*Ninnuvina-Todi*) - his bewitching beauty, his speech, his fame and the bow and arrows he holds. Leave mere mortals alone - even Seeta Devi found joy in seeing his beautiful form, "*Soundaryamulo Sukhamu Seetammaku*" (*Lekhana-Asaveri*). His dark-coloured countenance was attractive: "*Shyaama Sundaraanga sakala shaktiyu neevera*" (*Shyamasundaranga-Dhanyasi*); "*Ghana samana neela*" (*Janaki Ramana - Shuddha Seemantini*) and "*Rama Pahi Meghashyama Pahi*" (*Kapi*).

The captivating beauty of Rama's face is the theme of a composition - "*Muddu momu elaagu chelangenno*" - "How did that face shine?", the reply to which is suggestively couched in the *Raga*, *Sooryakaanta*. Contrasts on the same theme are found in passages like "*Raakaa shashi Vadana*" (*Takka*) and "*Sukkala Raayani geru momu gala*" (*Pakkala Nilabadi-Kharaharapriya*) - where Rama's facial beauty is equated with the moon. The overall corporeal beauty of Rama is enchanting - "*Sundara tara deham*" (*Pantuvarali*) "*Neeraja nayana ghananeela sudrudadeha*" (*Vasudeva Varaguna-Bilahari*) "*Marakataanga madi nenchavaladu*" (*Marachevaadana-Kedara*).

Tyagaraja has no qualms in admitting that it is the incessant enchantment of Rama's form that has blossomed as devotion, "*Anayamu nee sogasanu gani ponguchunu antarangamuna nadi premato ninu*" (*Koniyaade Naayeda Kokiladhwani*). Some other compositions of this genre are "*Saketa Niketana*" (*Kannada*), "*Ide Bhagya*" (*Kannada*), "*Mohana Rama*" (*Mohana*), "*Nee muddu momu*" (*Kamalamanohari*) - where Tyagaraja also declares his love to Rama - "*marulu konnaanu madana janaka*", "*Ennadu jootuno*" and "*Okapari Joodaga raada*" (*Kalavati*), "*Saraseeruhaanana*" (*Mukhari*) and "*Sogasu jooda*" (*Kannada Gowla*).

The beauty of Rama's eyes is described in compositions like "*Rara Seeta*" (*Hindola Vasanta*), "*Challaga Naato*" (*Vegavahini*) and "*Vanaja Nayana*" (*Kedaragowla*). The movement of hair, side-burns on the cheek is appreciated in

passages like "Alakallaadagagani" (Madhyamavati) and "Alakala muddunu tilakapu deerudu, galamuna shobillu kanakabhooshanamula" (Meru Samaana-Mayamalavagowla); in fact, this composition in Raga Mayamalavagowla pictures an overall aesthetic concept of Rama's beauty. The dalliance, radiance, beauty of the clothes worn can be perceived in passages like "Kanakana ruchira, kanaka vasana ninnu" (Varali). The beauty stemming from jewels adorning Rama is described as, "Tejarillu navarainapu divya bhooshana" (Raju vedala-Todi), "Uramuna mutyapusarula chayamuto" (Nannu palimma-Mohana) and so on. The grandeur of Rama's royal visage is stated in compositions like "Koluvaipunnaade" (Bhairavi) and "Koluvaipunnaade" (Devagandhari).

Beauty can be visual, as shown; appreciation of audio-beauty is also integral to Shringara Rasa Anubhava. Next to Rama's personal beauty, comes the beauty of His speech. Valmiki wrote:

"Smita poorvaabhibhaashi,
Poorvabhaashi priyamvadaha,
smita poorvancha bhaashate,
mrudupoorvancha bhaashate".

Tyagaraja frequently mentions these qualities of Rama's speech. Rama is said to be "Mrudubhasha" (Jaya Jaya Shri Raghurama-Gaun), "Mrudubhaashana Nata Vibheeshana" (Maruva Dhanyasi), "Mrudu Subhasha" (Rama nee samana-Kharaharapriya) and "mellani maatalu" (Intanuchugundakriya). We cannot overlook compositions like "Sudha maadhurya bhashana" (Sindhuramakriya), "Aadamodi galade" (Charukeshi) and above all, Maataadavemi naato (Neelambari) - in which, Tyagaraja extols Rama as the epitome of sweetness, Maadhurya poorna aadhaara.

Tyagaraja yearns for Rama's company and for a one-to-one conversations, which he states, uplifts him to etherial heights - "Eduredure joochi endugaana nea hrudayaaniki ento hitavaleka".

Is this not portrayal of beauty? Is this not Shringara Rasa too?

We considered audio and visual beauty separately. Let us now delve to the combined or overall effect. Tyagaraja longs to see Rama with Seeta, seated on the golden throne and longs for Rama to speak to him: "Shrungaarinchukoni cheluvonta ninnu gani....manasu ranjilla balka raada" (Rama Abhirama - Dhanyasi). The term "Abhirama" signifies the intrinsic potentiality for attraction and is a delectable expression, also used in another composition "Rama Abhirama" (Darbar). It is not an easy task to describe Rama's beauty, evarivalla varnimpada dagune (Enta Muddo-Bindumalini).

We shall digress a little at this stage. A passage in this Bindumalini Kriti is "attameeda kanulaasaku dasulu safta bhagavata vesulairi; another is enta vaaralaina gaani kama chinta aakraantulainaar. The first passage laments as to how voyeurs, women chasers masquerade as devotees. The second states as to how people become prey to passion, lust, Kama. This is adequate proof that Tyagaraja does distinguish between Kama and Shringara which hypothesises is the keystone of this document - much in divergence with the view of the learned scholar whose views were cited.

Rama is the pinnacle of Shringara Rasa. He is Seetamanohara Shringarashekara - (Rama Manohari); He is Shringara Shekara Suravairee raja bhanga - Maati maatiki-Mohana). There is no banality in the Shringara Rasa Anubhava of Rama. In Shringara Rasa, "Nakha - Shikha Varnana" - description of the beauty from the top to the toe, is an exotic feature. This is seen in Kritis like "Endu Kowgilindura" (Shuddha Deshi) and "Nee Rama Rama neekidi" (Saurashtra) and two other compositions, as well.

Another salient feature is the "Nayaki - Nayaka Bhava" - where the devotee is deemed as a damsel desiring union with the ultimate Lord, her Beloved. This Bhava influenced even Sufi-saints like Malik Muhammad Jayasi. Tyagaraja declares in the Suddha-Desi Kriti that he longs to be united with Rama and be hugged by him. He openly declares his love for Rama: "Rama,

Sri Tyagaraja prema" (Chesinadella-Todi). The entire spectrum of Tyagaraja's thoughts is enveloped by Rama: "Ninne gaani madi nenne jaala norula" (Marugelara-Jayantashri). Tyagaraja declares his love for Rama in an unambiguous manner "Valachi bhaktimaargamuton ninnu (Chalamelara-Marga Hindola). I fell in love with you and developed it as devotion. Tyagaraja says that yoga to him is merely to love Rama - "Yogamu neepai anuraagamu gaani (Raara Seeta - Hindola Vasantam); such a view is re-affirmed in Vanaja nayanudani valachitavo vaani manasu dayalede (Kedaragowla); I fell in love with that lotus-eyed Lord but He seems to have no sympathy for me, says Tyagaraja. The Nayaki-Bhava is distinctly seen in the passage 'Naa joopu nee joopu sariga jesite jeyu, naa sukhamu evariki yeruga' (Rama Rama Ramachandra - Ghanta), meaning that none can describe the bliss felt (by Tyagaraja) when his eyes met those of Rama.

We can note, with interest, the usage of the term Praananaatha by Tyagaraja, to address the Lord, in compositions like Praananaatha Brova (Shoolini) and Nannupaalimpa (Mohana). As a Nayaki, Tyagaraja claims no exclusivity, though Rama is deemed to be "Oka maata, oka baana, oka patni gaarudu". See the passage, "cheliyaro naavale nathunaku galaremo raaledani jaali delisi". Wonder it be the reason for His not appearing before me (Dayaseyavayya - Yadukula Kamboji).

See what Tyagaraja is willing to do, if only Lord Rama appears before him - mungala ne natiyintu muddu maatala delintu, sangeetamu vinupintu, saareku ne santoshintu. I will sing and dance in His presence and seduce Him with sweet words. (Vaddayundade-Varali), Tyagaraja's Nayaka is as handsome (if not more) than Manmatha, "Kamma viltuni kanna kaanti (Teerunaa naaloni-Saveri) and Kamma viltuni kannama chakkani kalyanarama (Nammina vaarini - Bhairavi). In his Kaanta-Aasakti, Tyagaraja feels the pangs of separation, as can be seen in the compositions, Nannu Vidachi - (Reetigowla) and Ninnu bhaasi etta (Balahamsa). Tyagaraja laments as to how long

he should wait for Rama's arrival, watching the way he would come; how will the Nayaki pass time? Having surrendered herself body and soul, to Rama.

Neeke manasichhi nenu Rama ne menani panchinaanu, ennallu nee dova jootu Rama emani ne proddu tarotu (Kapi). Tyagaraja sought a permanent relationship with Rama - not a torrid affair; he sang "Patti viduvaraadu na chey" and "Gattiga nannu chey patte dennetiko.

Despite his Nayaki Bhava, Tyagaraja accorded primacy always to the Patita-Mahishi, Seeta Devi. This can be visualised in the passage, Kanikarambu kaligi Seetakantuni Kanya manasu ranjilla baltemada madana janakudu (Pahi Rama Rama - Karaharapriya) and also from ekantamuna Seeta sogorcchi jo kotta, kakasurudu cheyu cheekaaku sairinchi (E Ramuni- Vakulabharanam). A parentless maiden, with no support from relatives, can be constrained to choose her life-partner and accordingly carve out her path; Talli tandri leni baala tanna naaru koru reeti. The Nayaki (Tyagaraja) felt destitute and chose Rama as her partner: (Chera raavademi -Reetigowla). This Nayaki values chastity - absolute faith with the Nayaka is a must. A faithful Nayaki should not subject herself to the lecherous looks of loafer - like lovers Kanulu takani (Kalyana Vasanta).

There are unwanted and vested interests which can spoil a relationship of faith between the Nayaka and Nayaki, aalu biddalanu nammeru vaari kaachinchi parula kompala muncheru (Evaru Teliya - Punnavarali). Rama does not reciprocate at once. The Nayaki suffers pangs of separation, "Rajivalochana raajito raavemi raa, jeevanamu neeveraa", "Sundaramoorti naayandu daya raadu" (Inta taamasa-Saveri). The Nayaki means thus: "You took the initiative of befriending me and talking to me and now you are absent; I have no intentions of leaving you"; paliki konnallipudu paluka kunte vidutu naa (Sri Rama Rama - Saveri). This Nayaki remains steadfast. "If you are not around, I will not wander but will wait for you", "needu kentaku raaga aasa dasudai

atu iter tirige" (*Indukaa yee* - Mukhari). This Nayaki deposes her Sakhi (companion) to bring Rama over to her, the allegoric companion being the mind. *Chani tod*- (Harikhamboji), The Tyagaraja Nayaki is subject to Vipralamba but never is a Khandita Nayaki. See this Bhava in the Kriti "*Idi neeku*" (Punnagavarali).

The *Utsava Sampradaya* Kritis provide a varied form of Shringara Rasa, dealing with Shringara oriented acts like Nalangu, Laali etc. Examples include *Nagumomu Galavaari* (Madhyamavati), *Laali Yoogave* (Neelambari), *Laali laali yen* (Harikhamboji) and *Malle phoolu panpumeeda* (Ahiri). There is a finite touch of Shringara Rasa, even in *Prahlada Bhakti Vijaya*, in compositions like *Etla kanukunduno* (Ghanta). Do we not find the "Sogusu" in Kritis of the *Prahlada Bhakti Vijaya* like "*Ennaga manasuraani* (Neelambari) and *:Entanusu Varnintune* (Saurashtra)?

As stated earlier, a different version, perhaps, the most commonly understood version of Shringara Rasa dominates the *Aadavaramella goodi* (Yadukulakhambhoji) and *Eememo teliyaga* (Saurashtra) which have only a limited content of Tamasic Shringara Rasa. Note passages like "*Shrinaathu koluvamera chelula chekillu noltuchunu maanana mowanuchu*, in *Nomu E* (Punnagavarali), which describe cheek to cheek contact and "drinking the lips". The contents of Kritis like, "*Perugu paalu*" (Ghanta) and "*Vedavaakya*" (Mohana) have also traces of eroticism. The *vastra-apaharana* is deftly dealt with by Tyagaraja. We have examples of Satwic Shringara Rasa in Kritis like "*Gandhamu puyyuruga*" (Punnagavarali) and *Guma guma gumayani* (Saurashtra).

Eroticism is ancillary and perhaps integral to Shringara Rasa but can never be Shringara Rasa in entirety, unless one has a depraved mind. Tyagaraja distinguishes between Shringara Rasa and Kama. He describes Rama as "*Gata Kama jana hrudayaarnava kalaadhaaruni* - the moon rising from the ocean of the minds of noble souls who have rid themselves of Kama (*Re Manasa* - Todi). See another passage - *Kaamuni daasulu naa palukula vini kaavalasinatuta nada nayegada* (*Rama Rama* - Nadanamakriya) - he denounces the slaves of sensory pleasures.

Tyagaraja distances himself from such persons *Rati raju dasula vedalenu* (*Abhimaanamu* - Aandhali), Tyagaraja's approach to Shringara Rasa was three-fold, as per tradition and his concept of Shringara was not mere eroticism. Thus, it stands established that there is no superimposition of this writer's views on the views of Tyagaraja. The unwarranted remarks of the learned scholar, quoted earlier, fall flat. The concept of Shringara Rasa, of Tyagaraja is dignified, if not divine and encompasses emotive expressions-Aasaktis like *Roopa-Aasakti*, *Smarana Aasakti*, *Sakhya-Aasakti*, *Kaanta Aasakti* and *Parama Viraha Aasakti* etc., which are the hallmarks of a great Bhakta. Were it not so, why do we have two Kritis *Shri Rama Jayarama Shringara Rama*, one each in *Yadukula Khamboji* and *Madhyamavati*? I commend unto that scholar, the fact that Rama, to Tyagaraja, was *Paripoorna Kaama*.

The influence of Padams and Javalis has imparted an unwanted connotation of Shringara Rasa. The truth is different, as perceived in the compositions of Tyagaraja.



On Music and Musicians

By S. V. K.

Sri Tyagaraja is the one and only Vaggeyakara who has spoken extensively of the greatness of music as a moksha sadhana and of the deplorable attitude of practitioners of Sangita. In several songs the saint-composer has given extensive interpretation to what Sage Valmiki has described Sri Rama as,

"*Gandarve-cha-bhuvi-sreshtaha-babhoova Bharatagrajaha*"

(The best among the votaries of Sangita Vidya).

In the Kambhoji song, *Sri Raghuvaraaprimeya*, he describes his Ishta Devata, Sri Rama, as one who delights in Swara, Laya, Murchana (*Swara-layaadhi-moorchanollasita-Sri Raghuvaraaprimeya*). He has also graphically described Sri Rama as one who is the embodiment of Nada taking the human form and also explained the seven Swaras, as the bells in Rama's bow, which is Raga incarnate, the Ghana, Naya and Desya as the bow strings, Talas and Gatis as the arrows and Sangatis as appropriate Rasa-laden speech. He goes one step further to unburden his feelings in the most rhapsodically structured song in *Yadukula Kambhoji*.

*Naada-Brahmaananda
Rasaakriti-Gala* (*Nee Dayache Rama*)

(Rama, the essence of the Brahmananda of Naada is your body.)

*Vara-Mridhu-Bhasha
Swaramaya-Bhoosha
Vara-Thyagaraja
Vaag-Chelavrita* (*Nee Dayache*)

(Soft-spoken Sri Rama, the Swaras adorn you and you are clothed with the garb of Sri Tyagaraja's Sahityas.)

What supreme confidence of his unswerving Bhakti could have inspired to claim that his songs are the garbs clothing Sri Rama! This is not the only song in which he speaks about the greatness of music face-to-face with Sri Rama. In another song in *Atana*, *Sripapriya Sangitopasana*, he revels in the thought that like himself Sri Rama is a *Saptaswarachari*, one who traverses the seven Swaras. What should be the kind of music that in his *Sriranjani* song he raises *Sokkajeyu-Dheerudevvado* (Who is the one who can make you melt with delight by song to the accompaniment of the *Mridanga Tala*? This question is answered by himself in the *Atana* song referred to earlier:

*Ranjimpa-jesedu-Raagambulu
Marjulamagu-Avataramuletti
Sruti-jaati-Visaaradaha
Talagna-Aprayasena
Mokshamargam Niyachchali*

(One who is an expert in Veena play, well versed in *Sruti* and its varieties, having deep understanding of *Tala* reaches moksha without effort.)

That Sangita is a Moksha Sadhana is well recognised. To Yagnavalkya's cryptic couplet Sri Tyagaraja almost gives a *Bhashya* in some songs. One of the most telling is the *Kirtana* in *Mukhari*:

*Sangita.-Saastra-Gnanamu
Saaroopya Sowkyadame-Manasa*

(Sangita gnana can confer *Sarupya* on the musician)

*Sringara--Rasaadyakila
Saara-Bhooritha
Ramakatha Aanandaabdi-yutha* (*Sangita*).

(Sangita that contains in its fold the essence of *Sringara* and other *Rasas* exemplified)

In the blissful ocean of Rama Katha-such music brings Saroopya.)

What more benefits can one expect?

*Prema-Bhakti-Sujana-Vaatsalyamu
Srimad-Ramaa Vara Katakshamu
Nema-Nishthyasodanam-Osangune*

(Sangita blesses one with affection, devotion, attachment to good things, the Kataksha of Lord of Lakshmi, austerities, meditation, glory and wealth.)

Is there anything more that a devoted musician can long for in this world? Many Vidwans somehow have not thought it fit to render this song. Probably they are ignorant of its lofty contents and the one song that can rivet their unsteady devotion to the art they practise. But Tyagaraja, in a farsighted way, has expressed similar sentiments in his Sri Raga Pancharatna which he was sure would be a favourite item in cutcheries. In his last Charana referring to those who are immersed in Bhagavata Ramayana and Gita, Tyagaraja has pertinently made mention of the boons of Sangita to Mahanubhavas who diligently practise Sangita.

*Bhava-Raaga-Layaadhi
Sowkhyamuche-Chiraayuvul-Galigi*

(Obelance to those Mahanubhavas who acquire longevity and prosperity through the delights of music replete with Bhava, Raga, Laya and other aspects.)

After delighting himself in visualising Sri Rama as an embodiment of Sat-Sangita, and expounding the greatness of the Sangita Sastra as a means of attaining all the benefits that make for a good life in this world and Moksha, Tyagaraja describes in almost disdainful way musicians who prostitute their art for name, fame, money and position. His scathing remarks in one or two of his songs are enough to assess the state of art today, perhaps a situation that prevailed among his fraternity during his life time

too. If Sangita, according to the scriptures, takes one to Moksha Tyagaraja emphatically proclaims who is entitled to Moksha.

*Mokshamu galada
Saakshatkara-nee
Sat-Bhakti-Sangita
Gnana-Viheenulaku*

(Are the doors of Moksha open to musicians who are devoid of real devotion and Sangita Gnana-Oh Saakshatkara?)

In this piece he speaks in general of Bhakti-bereft practitioners of music. In one or two songs, he is more specific.

*Vara-Raaga-Layaagnalu
Daamanuchu-Vadareraya
Swara-jaati-Moorchana-bedamul
Swanthamandu-deliyaga-Nundi*

Without any insight into Swaras, Jaati, Moorchana and their variations many Vidwans in ignorance brag and go about as veterans of Sangita.)

He is pinpointing commercialisation of music in his Sankarabharanam song "Mariyaadagadura"

*Raagamu-Taalamu-Rakti-Bhakti
Gnana Yogamu. Mari Anuragamuleni
Bhagavathulu-Udarasayanule-Gani*

(Bhagavathas completely devoid of Raga, Tala, Bhakti, Gnana, Yoga, are only interested in filling their stomach.)

These are enough castigation of vidwans who have brought Sangita from Moksha sadhana to Kukshasadana (belly-filling) art. If at all there is anyone who can talk in such disparaging terms, it can only be Tyagaraja. What stature is his Bhakti and perception of the true purpose of Sangita that he addresses his Ishta Devata with all confidence of the superiority of his music in two Kirtanas. In his Mukhari song "Elavata" he asks Sri Rama what prompted him to take the

Avatara? Was it to make war or to rule over Ayodhya? To give Darshan to Rishis? To save people from Samsara? Finally comes the crowning statement. Is it to confer on Tyagaraja blessings to compose hundreds of Kirtanas on you, Oh Raghava? (Raagaratna malikalu-Rasinchina-Tyagarajuku-Vara Mosangutaka).

Which other Vaggekaras has this confident air of the greatness of his own compositions? More significant is his other song in Mukhari "Chintistunnade Yamudu".

*Daari-Teliyakha-Thiruge
Vaarulaina-Chalunante
Saaramani Thyagaraju
Sankirtanam-Baaderanuchu
(Chintistunnade)*

(Yama has become greatly concerned that even those who have no discernment to distinguish the right and the wrong path of life and whom he expected to come to Yamaloka, have started singing the Kirtanas of Sri Tyagaraja.)

The authentic words of the Moksha Marga of Tyagaraja are there for the benefit of Vidwans. For one thing, his Kirtanas are less and less in the programmes of musicians today. The Tyagaraja Aradhana can induce the musicians for sincere heart searching. The way the Aradhana is conducted and the casual attitude of musicians in rendering Tyagaraja Kirtanas, Yama today has no cause for anxiety because in cutcheries if at all they are sung, it is like Bhakti in his Sankarabharana song, Bhakti-Bichchameeyave.

*Pranamuleni Vaniki Bangaru Paga Chutti
Aani Vajra Bhooshana
Muramandu-Bettu-Riti*

(Like decorating a dead body with all ornaments (musicians indulge in barren sangatis, neraval and swaras making Bhakti music dead).

Let our Vidwans pay heed to Sri Tyagaraja's comments.

Courtesy : "Know Your Tyagaraja"

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From the Archives

Appreciation of Music

By D. K. Jayaraman

Music is divine. It is a treasure. It is an ocean. It belongs to the common man. The degree to which music is listened and enjoyed differs from person to person.

There are two types of performers. One who enjoys music while performing and the other who is more interested in the display of skills, quality and power.

Listener - Types

The listeners can be classified into two major groups. One group which is capable of singing or playing an instrument and also enjoys listening and the other group is not capable of performing but will be good listeners. Both the groups are capable of appreciating music in their own ways.

Thus the above groups show an 'understanding' of music and 'liking' music respectively.

Those who are able to 'understand' music are people who possess the knowledge of the Art of Music by virtue of themselves being artists and those who are able to 'like' music are people who cannot perform but enjoy music. There is yet another category of people who are knowledgeable of Science of Music. Some of them are good performers also while some are not. This category of people listen to music and comment on the technicalities, talents etc., of the performer.

In all this, one will see the basic appreciation of music whether it is Karnatic, Hindustani or Western.

For one who is good at listening and appreciating, music becomes a part and parcel of life inasmuch as it is the only thing that intoxicates a person without really driving him out of senses. Music is the only thing that offers enormous amount of mental energy to the human being. Of course we also learn behavioural changes in plants through Music.

Appreciation of music can vary from person to person: (i) on the technical aspects (ii) the vocal power and (iii) presentation of the performer; but every type of listener enjoys music in varied degrees.

It is possible to enjoy music without 'understanding' it. It is also possible for one to appreciate music by 'understanding' the technicalities but fail to enjoy it. However, if one has to enjoy and appreciate music he has to 'understand' it, for, 'understanding' music will enhance one's ultimate pleasure.

The Art of Music cannot be fulfilled without the three categories of people involved in it: (i) the Composer (ii) the performer and (iii) the listener.

Though a few performers sing or play an instrument for their own satisfaction "Atma Trupti", the "composer" and the "performer" otherwise depend on the 'listeners' for existence.

The listeners listen to music through 'direct' and 'indirect' means. i.e., live and through the electronic media or cinema. In the latter there is a time lag between the time of performance and listening.

In 'direct' listening the audience get the pleasure of live performance and cultural experience of the art and meets the artists face to face whereas in 'indirect' listening which is amplified after careful rehearsal and editing, the listeners miss the advantage of the cultural and live experience.

The types of listening can be classified as follows :-

1. Hearing but not listening to music. In this case, the mind is preoccupied that one only hears music.
2. Listening to music under emotional conditions where listening is needed to set the mind at rest and no appreciation is possible.

3. Listening to music for the sake of listening where full concentration and appreciation are involved.

It is not possible for anyone to enjoy music fully unless the mind is trained towards the same. This is required more particularly for Karnatic Music which is a great science by itself and has so much in it that no other system of music can claim equality.

Apparently the need to educate people on musical appreciation becomes inevitable. This is not an easy job.

There used to be a time when performances would extend to long hours. Both the performers and the audience had the time and patience towards the same. Things have changed now. We are in a fast moving world. More young performers are in the arena and careful, short time allocations have become necessary and in the process the audience also get a variety. The audience expect pleasure and enjoyment of

music in short duration. The attitude of the performer needs to be carefully developed in the sense that while he/she has the primary responsibility of presenting a pleasant and absorbing performance, the basic structure of the Karnatic classical music should not be compromised, for the listeners of to-day have become more sensitive that the performer will risk his profession if he/she chooses to compromise any one of the above in the process.

This task lay largely in the hands of Music Teachers who should be able to feel the pulse of the general audience from time to time and make adjustments in the teaching methods without sacrificing the basic qualities of the great science of Karnatic Music.

This is certainly bound to enhance the degree of appreciation of music particularly Karnatic Music which forms the fine texture of our Indian Culture.

Head Weight - Swell- head

Many great teachers have desisted from praising the talent of their disciples in their presence lest they should lose balance to the detriment of the pursuit of music.

Some instances having a bearing on this follow:

T. K. Murthy mentions that Vaidyanatha Ayyar, his guru, discouraged his students from hearing words of praise lest they should develop swell-head. 'Leave the hall as soon as the concert is over', he would say and even now I obey that dictum."

Bidaram Krishnappa never allowed his disciple, T. Chowdiah to accompany others for long and his attitude bordered on harshness too.

Pallavi Gopala Ayyar went to his master, Panchimiriyam Adippayya with the Kalyani Varnam composed by him for approval and approbation. But the guru put him down with the remark that the Varnam was just a 'school boy's composition,' to keep his disciple's spirits within bounds. He encouraged him later to flower into a great musician-composer.

T. N. Krishnan was quite young and was accompanying his guru, Semmangudi Srinivasa Ayyar. The audience applauded the violinist often and too often. The guru-vocalist explained that his disciple was at an impressionable age and that light-hearted applauses might not do him good. The audience understood him. Prof. T. N. Krishnan provides violin support only to his guru now.

Trivandrum Raghava Ayyar went to his guru, Parameswara Ayyar for appreciation. He was told, 'You are fit only to hold the torch to Vadivelu'. Vadivelu was the illustrious violin colossus among the Tanjore Quartette. Raghava and Vadivelu were the senior vidwans in the Court of Swati Tirunal with Parameswara Ayyar, the doyen. Raghava Ayyar, in fact, was a jewel in the court.

Courtesy : "A Garland"

A Tribute

My Association with Sangita Kalanidhi T. BRINDA

I first fell in love with Brinda's music when I heard her render a beautiful phrase in Tyagaraja's Kriti in Balahamsa 'Parulanu vedanu'. She was singing the Anupallavi of this song and sang it with such clarity and sophistication that all it took was those few seconds for me to realise her class. I must have been around 14 or 15 years old then. Those few seconds of music had tonal purity, depth, voice modulation, note spacing, emotive appeal and a host of other intangible aspects which brought out the best aspects of Karnatic music.

I had always had a healthy regard for Sangita Kalanidhi T. Brinda because of the awe with which many other musicians used to speak of her. I had not, until then, heard any of her astounding performances and had convinced myself that she was to be respected even if her music did not attract me. I was keen to learn from her the Padams of Kshetragna, which, even before my teens, I knew to be magnificent. Today, I know that my judgement then was spot on.

After that superb radio concert, I spoke to my father about learning a few pieces from her. He told me that it was a wonderful idea and that he had himself learnt from her when he was studying in the Central College of Carnatic Music.

I knew that Brindamma - as she was affectionately and respectfully referred to - was most inaccessible to all and sundry and she could very well turn me down, unless I was introduced properly. She had taught stalwarts like Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, Ramnad Krishnan, and M. S. Subbulakshmi and had turned down many other eminent artists whom she did not see as sufficiently capable candidates and I was but a kid in my teens!

No doubt I had established myself in the

field and earned name, fame and money, but these would NOT be the yardsticks Brindamma ever went by. For all I knew, these things could very well count against me when it came to her perception!

I enlisted the late Y. G. Doraisami's support and he promised to introduce me to her. YGD was a great connoisseur and patron of high class Art and had been hailed as a Culture Vulture because he had a keen eye to spot talent and promote it. He had been close to Brinda's family for many decades and also had a sizeable amount of love and respect for me as a musician and as a person. He had even invited me to perform in the Autumn Festival of Paris and Festival of India in France in 1985, when he was the Cultural Adviser to the Government of France.

One rainy evening, sometime in 1985-86, YGD and I drove over to Brindamma's house. After the usual pleasantries, Brindamma asked me the purpose of my visit. I hardly knew head from tail and I just blurted out, "I want to learn Padams and Javalis from you".

One could have cut the silence with a knife. YGD quickly came to my rescue with a cue, telling me that Brindamma was an expert not merely in Padams and Javalis but a whole lot of other great composers as well, such as Tyagaraja, Dikshitar, Syama Sastri and Patnam Subramania Iyer.

I then saw where the snag was. Brindamma obviously did not want to be labelled as a specialist in just Padams and Javalis when she had accomplished so much more and had that much more to share. I quickly said, "Yeah, yeah, I certainly want to know them all but did not know if it would be convenient to you!" This was not untrue since Brindamma was nearly 75 then. She however replied that she would teach me and asked me to come the very next day!

When I went, the next evening, she started with Muthuswami Dikshitar's brilliant masterpiece, *Sri Kamalambike*, in the Raga Sri. The song was captivating and I have not heard a better version of it till date. I gradually learnt more and more about her. She had been born in 1912, in a family known for its selfless preservation of music and dance in their purest forms. Her mother Kamakshi Ammal had introduced her to music at a very tender age. This was further strengthened when she learnt from Kanchipuram Naina Pillai, as a resident disciple from her eighth year. Within a short span of three years, she had mastered over 300 compositions of Tyagaraja, besides various other musical forms like *Tevaram* and *Tiruppugazh*. She went back home and enriched her repertoire learning from her grandmother, the legendary Veena Dhanammal.

Brindamma never allowed students to record her classes but did not veto me down when I wondered if I could notate the songs as she sang them. I realised over a period of time that she was not merely a gifted artiste to whom music was as natural as breathing. She was much more than that. She could be keenly analytical and often discussed musical points intellectually.

My respect for her increased day by day as I saw that she was a person with a huge amount of conviction and strength of character to stick to values she believed in. I have not seen many people who have the amount of strength and courage she had to do ONLY what she believed in and not compromise at all for the sake of acclaim, awards or assets. She was a very straightforward person and never suffered incompetence or compromise of values. She could be extremely subtle and, at times sarcastic but always sharp. She had a strong sense of humour and enjoyed life.

Her music was full of microscopic nuances. She had a captivating voice, almost ideal for Karnatic music. It had clarity, sweetness, depth and majesty. She was in control whether she sang slowly or even super slow, plain notes or notes with oscillations, soft or loud. She was

probably the FIRST vocalist to highlight **voice modulation** as a major aspect of music and it made a tremendous difference to the class of the music. Recordings of many of her contemporaries - both male and female musicians - testify to the fact that they believed in singing mostly in their natural voices. Brindamma started modulating her voice to make it sharper when she sang subtle, fast phrases in higher regions which impart a laser beam precision and intensity to the phrases and deeper when she sang in the lower octaves or sustain notes with *Karvais*.

This was a marked contrast to many artistes singing louder as they approached the high notes and loudest in the pauses in notes like Tara Sthayi (high octave) Panchamam. Recordings will show that many of these artistes were not comfortable in the lower octaves. Brindamma believed that screaming in the higher octaves prevented clarity in the lower octaves and moreover, was ruinous to the vocal cords in the long run. That her judgement and technique was right, was evidenced in her concerts in early 1990-s when she performed with no range or clarity loss even when past 80.

I had, in my early years, developed an image of Brindamma's comfort zone being limited to slow music. I was however, most pleasantly surprised when I heard her effortless handling of fast or medium-fast Kritis like *Manasa etulo* (Malayamarutam), *Nee muddu momu* (Kamalamanohari), *Vinave O Monasa* (Vivardhini), *Janakiramana* (Suddhaseemantini), or *Chinnanadana* (Kalanidhi). She sang even pieces like *Pakkala nilabadi* (Kharaharapriya) or *Epapamu* (Alana) at speeds above average and laced with demanding variations.

One almost only associated her with Padams of masters like Kshetragna, Sarangapani, Ghanam Krishna Iyer and so on. That was due to the fact that each rendition of pieces like *Moratopu* (Sahana), *Ninnu joochi* (Punnagavarali), *Rama Rama* (Bhairavi), *Ososi* (Mukhari), *amarasaksha* (Yadukulakambodhi) and *Yalapadare* (Begada) brought out something

one might have missed in previous auditions. They never failed to astound or refresh me.

One more important misconception is that Brindamma's style, especially in Padams, is all about oscillated notes. Actually, Brindamma's forte was to highlight the long, plain notes with her tranquil voice and intersperse them with gems of microscopic phrases, which opened up a new world altogether. Most quality musicians have adored those nuances and many have tried to incorporate them one way or other.

Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, who learnt a few masterpieces from Brinda, and who has had a keen interest in me from a very early age, was very happy when he heard from someone that I had decided to go to Brindamma to learn some masterpieces. He immediately called her up and told her, "Look here, Brinda, make sure that you teach Ravikiran everything that you know. Do not hold back, for you will never get a better musician for a student". Both Semmangudi Mama and Brindamma revealed this separately a few years after I went to learn from her!

Semmangudi Mama has gone on record declaring in public that he would consider any human life to be fulfilled if one could render just ONE piece as Brinda did. D. K. Pattammal once told me that she was simply captivated by what Brinda did and that she learnt a few Padams from Brinda's sister Muktha (who was more accessible), out of sheer love. And her renditions of even Kritis like *Brovavamma* in Manji are proof of how much she has grasped from Brinda's music.

As soon as I learnt a new song, I used to teach it to my brother Shashikiran, sister Kiranavali and cousin Ganesh. I used to refer to the words and sometimes also make minor alterations in the music, whenever I felt that they were called for but during classes with her, I never sang a piece in any other way than what she taught! This was because I respected her view

that one should not attempt to correct traditional things, even if one knew that certain things were undesirable in them. I, on the other hand, believed that one should keep tradition as intact as possible, but with refinements, should they be needed. But I did not feel it right to parade my views before her or get into an argument which would really be a stalemate as I was a person with deep convictions too! I also know of lots of other musicians being out of favour with her because they deviated from what she taught and argued with her. However, Brindamma eventually saw my standpoint and appreciated my restraint in not flaunting it to her and told me, "Ravi, if you feel that you need to change something slightly, go ahead and do it."

That she received most of the coveted awards like Sangita Kalanidhi from Music Academy, Sangeet Natak Academy Award, Sangita Kala Sikhamani from the Indian Fine Arts Society was only to be expected. I was keen that her 80th year was celebrated in a grand manner and was one of the co-ordinators for a felicitation function in Madras with a concert by M. S. Subbulakshmi. I also spoke to my good friend Mr. M. A. Baby, Member of Rajya Sabha and he instituted an award called the Swaralaya Puraskaram and selected Brindamma to be the first ever to receive that award. She received it from the then President of India, Sri Shankar Dayal Sharma. Brindamma sang a lovely concert after that, despite being in a lot of pain to her fractured hand. She was keen that I accompany her on the Chitravina in place of the violin.

I was in Australia on a concert tour when I received news of her demise that day three years ago, and was sad beyond words, not merely because she had been close to me personally in last few years. Or because she was an extraordinary musicians' musician. She was a rare human being. She represented not merely a great style of music but a great way of life.

- Chitravina N. Ravikiran

Dedication of
SHANMUKHANANDA HALL

to the Nation by Hon'ble

Shri **K. R. NARAYANAN**

PRESIDENT OF INDIA

THURSDAY THE 25TH NOVEMBER 1999- 7.30 P.M.

The President has kindly consented to bestow Honorary Patronship of the Sabha on

Ustad Amjad Ali Khan	Ms. Lata Mangeshkar	Dr. C. R. Vyas
Ustad Allah Rakha	Pandit Shivkumar Sharma	Shri Sharad Pawar
Pandit Bhimsen Joshi	Smt. M. S. Subbulakshmi	Shri I. M. Kadri
Dr. Gangubai Hangal	Dr. Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer	Shri Jasubhai Shah
Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia	Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra	

This will be followed by "Unity in Diversity" Concert by the followings Artists

INSTRUMENTALISTS

Satish Vyas (*Santoor*)
Niladrikumar (*Sitar*)
Rupak Kulkarni (*Flute*)
Dr. (Smt.) Suma Sudhindra (*Veena*)
Dhruv Ghosh (*Sarang*)

PERCUSSIONISTS

Shafat Ahmed Khan (*Tabla*)
Bhavani Shankar (*Pakhawaj*)
Mukundraj Deo (*Tabla*)
Arjun Kumar (*Mridangam*)
Chandramauli (*Ghatam*)
Harishankar (*Khanjira*)

VOCALISTS

Sanjeev Chimmalgil
Shriram Shintre
Shripat Hegde
Aparna Kelkar
Neha Mujumdar

Members are cordially invited to attend the momentous function. Due to limited number of seats, members are requested to obtain admission card from Sabha's counter any day after 15th November and before 22nd November 1999 against their Membership Card. Admission card will be given on first come first served basis.

Members are requested to occupy their seats before 7.10 p.m.

Dr V. Subramanian - President
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The Inner Aspect of Indian Music

By Prof. R. Srinivasan

From time immemorial in India music and other fine arts have gone hand in hand with Religion and played an important part in the religious life of India. Temples which form the pillar of Hinduism have been the sources of inspiration to artists and musicians. Cultural history of India shows clearly that fine arts thrived primarily in temples and had a prominent place in temple structure and temple functions. This is because Indian culture had always recognised the spiritual significance of Fine Arts and the Divine basis of Beauty. Any beauty that we see down here is only a reflection (however faint) of the Divine Beauty. God is not only Good and True but Beautiful. But for God's Beauty there will be no beauty in this world at all. And so all Fine Arts which are based on a conception and expression of Divine Beauty are in themselves manifestations of God, the Beautiful. Just as a sage working along the line of Intellect (Jnanayoga) approaches God in His aspect of Intelligence and a saint developing along the path of Love (Bhakti) glimpses God-head in His Love aspect, so does an artist evolving along the line of Beauty (Soundarya) realises the Divine in His aspect of Beauty. An artist is as much a yogi as a sage or a saint. The Great Ones of yore realised this truth and so temples were not only shrines of worship but seats of exquisite art expressions.

Music, as the queen of all arts, played a definite role in temples, not only in temples but in the ordinary life of the Indian People. Even today we find this musical instinct running in the very veins of our people.

Music has for its root basis sound, Nadam, which being refracted through Maya gave rise first to seven notes which later on evolved into 12, 16, 22, 53 notes of the scale. The Divine is called Nada Brahman and some philosophical schools deal with the first manifestation of Avyakta as Sound ('Logos', the Word). This

quite conforms to some of the latest scientific speculations regarding the fundamental units out of which the whole universe is built.

Unique Emotional Appeal

In the sense it is true that the musical expression is fundamental in human beings and its appeal universal. All art is in essence an expression of the inner being in man and music, the queen of Arts, is especially so. It is fundamentally related to the aesthetic and super-intellectual aspects of life. Just as spoken words express our inner thoughts however inadequately, music expresses some of the indefinable, subtle experiences of human nature in a way that it alone can do. The mode of achievement of this may be vague and may escape such analysis. Edward Carpenter speaking of the emotional appeal of all arts says-- "Some times people ask what is the meaning of such and such a work? Meaning be hanged!" It is this, at times inexpressible, subtle, vague, elusive appeal that is so essentially characteristic of all Indian Art, and especially of music. We have heard of the oft-quoted verse in Sanskrit

~"Pasurveti Sisurveti Veti Ganarasam phani"

In one sense this is literally true. A beast, a child on the side of innocence and a serpent on the side of the aggressive are responsive to music properly chosen. If a lullaby is not able to lull a child to sleep, one may feel certain that there is something wrong with its melody. If a good flute player or Nagaswaram player is not able to calm down a hissing cobra, it is time he examines what is wrong with him. In the same way, if any of our musicians finds he is not able to evoke any appeal at least in a certain section of his listeners, he has to examine himself with a view to discover what needs mending in his musical ideas.

We are told that every occurrence in this world of phenomena leads us in the ultimate analysis to vibrations. It is only a very limited range of these vibrations in a certain limited number of media that are cognisable by our outer senses. A certain gamut gives the experience of sound, another gamut the phenomenon of light and so on, but there are ranges of vibrations below as well as above our sensuous experiences. In the case of music, the vibrations set up in air affecting certain regions in our auditory organism convey certain impressions to the brain which in its turn relates them to other aspects in our nature on the principle of correspondence i.e., the sense vibrations are converted into subtle vibrations in some of the subjective aspects of our nature, mind, emotion, intuition, etc. It is a matter of common experience that sense experiences very often produce results in aspects of a man's nature not so obviously related to the outer senses. Man is not merely a bundle of organs and senses. The physical part is the least important part of his existence. He has an emotional and intellectual life, a moral life, a superintellectual or intuitional life and a spiritual life of his own. Though these are far too subtle to be clearly envisaged by the ordinary man, any thinking individual will be able to see the importance played by these aspects of human nature in the life of the individual.

Fine Arts - The Soul of the Nation

The one vital difference between expressing human thoughts in spoken words and expressing human emotions through music is the fact that while spoken words may unconsciously or deliberately mislead and give erroneous impressions, the musical expression of the inner emotion can never mislead, because it is not in general based on any conventional combination of sounds as in the case of spoken words, and hence understanding human nature through its musical expression will lead to a truer and better understanding than perhaps through the camouflage of spoken words. This point was kept in mind by Plato when he said that one has to be exceedingly careful in altering the musical

system of a nation lest the change should affect the very vital political foundations of the State. There is a good deal of truth about this statement: A soul, individual or national, can express its inner nature best through its fine arts. One can more or less get a glimpse of the soul of a man or nation more correctly through his or its aesthetic expression than otherwise. A Nation's art is an objective expression of what the nation is in reality and to introduce vital changes in its musical expression is to touch the essential uniqueness of the nation as expressed in her arts.

When I hear Indian music I feel for the time being to be in communion with the soul of my motherland. In its wonderful Raga system, and in the intensely individualistic attitude of our musical expression I find the essential otherworldliness and belief in the Divinity of man which are characteristic of India culture. Man is essentially Divine and is and can realise himself to be the vital centre of the whole universe, and all the other outer appurtenances are only a help to this realisation. And so in Indian music, the singer dominates, whatever accompaniments are used they are only to hang on him or her. While improvisation is the very law of music and the greatest achievement is in its Raga system which is beyond words, the whole scheme is so planned that the chief musician dominates and sets the pace for his accompanists to follow. I consider this to be the essential feature of our music.

As expressing human emotions, there is no other aspect of art or philosophy which can excel music. Human emotions, while they can in general be grouped under several heads, are beyond clear-cut definition. We can only deal with certain broad divergences. Some of these emotions are very difficult to express either by words or by action; but such emotions can be expressed by music. I have myself felt that emotions like Shant, self-surrender and so on are best expressed either in music or not expressed at all. While we may not agree with the classification of our current Ragas according to their emotions, it is beyond doubt that certain Ragas definitely evoke some typical emotions.

There are certain other aspects of music which have not yet come to be universally recognised. We hear now-a-days of colour being used for the curing of diseases. In mental hospitals it is found that colour plays a very important part on various types of dementia. It has been found that red coloured glass for window shutters tends to put more activity into people who are suffering from mental languor, morbidity etc. In the same way, it is quite possible that different types of music may be used as treatment for various types of mental disorders. Any disease is in essence an abnormality and all treatments are attempts to introduce normal conditions where abnormality exists, and music to my mind can be used to minimise such abnormalities.

Potency of Music

It is a potential field for investigation and our music lovers and experts will do well to start an investigation in this unexplored field. I do not see why, in a mental hospital, there could not be a "Todi" ward, or a "Kalyani" ward, or a "Mohanam" ward for those people whose abnormal conditions stand a chance of being influenced for the better by these particular Ragas. I am sure that turbulent lunatics could to a very large extent be made amenable and to some extent quieted by Neelambari or Yadukula Kambhoji. Similarly cynical and morbid temperaments could be enlivened by Atana or Begada. This is a field of investigation which is worth being taken up by people who are really interested in musical art.

As an example of the characteristic quieting influence music has on unruly natures, I may mention an experiment tried and found effective in a school of Madame Montessori. A teacher who found one class particularly turbulent started giving music and dancing lessons to the pupils. The result was remarkable; they gradually became quiet and well-behaved. When one of the pupils was asked why she left off jumping about she simply looked up and said, "It isn't nice to jump." That small phrase of the pupil sums up tersely the potency of music.

Above all these things, there is inherently something noble, beautiful and spiritual about our music, provided we take the trouble to give a little training to our ears. There is no enjoyment more impersonal and at the same time more deep than what we get out of it. I have sat out music concerts extending over four hours and five hours and never felt the length of time. I have felt lifted out of time and space and it was like a wrench to get back to normal conditions at the end of the concert. I am not aware of any other influence which can achieve this. It prepares our very soul for something higher. While we are under its influence our nature is opened upwards and it is then so easy for higher influences to pour into us and permeate our very nature. It is at such moments that we get glimpses of Divinity.

Courtesy: "Shashtiabdapurti Souvenir"

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A Very Happy Diwali.

"Musiri Mama"

I was recently told about a special feature brought out by "SHANMUKHA" on Shri Mushiri Subramania Iyer, who was one of those celebrated musicians among the galaxy of Vidwans of the recent past. On hearing this, I thought I should pen my reminiscences and also contribute, though late, about this great man, so dear to me.

My association with Sangita Kalanidhi Musiri Subramania Iyer, whom I always affectionately refer to as Musiri Mama, dates back to when I was just six years old. I cherish this acquaintance, as he was one of the Doyens of Karnatic Music.

My father Prof. R. Srinivasan, a multifaceted personality was fond of 3M's (Music, Mathematics and Mysticism). Musicians held him in high esteem for his profound proficiency in Music. An Harikatha exponent and a versatile composer in his own right, he was a puritan to the core.

Musicians who came to Trivandram at the behest of my father to give concerts at the palace or elsewhere always stayed with us. Almost every musician of yesteryears (save a few) had stayed with us. They were well looked after and we ensured that they had a comfortable stay and their needs attended to immediately. Musicians on receiving such royal treatment developed a close relation with our family and had the highest respect for my father.

This is how I came in contact with Musiri Mama who was one of the many musicians who came and stayed with us. Among the many Vidwans, Musiri Mama and Tanjavur Vaitha Mama (Vaidhyanaatha Iyer - the great Mridanga Vidwan) were very close to us. They were both fond of my music. Thangam was how Musiri Mama used to affectionately call me.

I wish to share one particular incident which is really unforgettable. Depending on his mood, Mama would sometimes start singing. He used to take up a Raga, elaborate it, explore in depth its subtleties and intricate nuances, and follow it up with a Kriti, Niraval and solfa passages. On one such occasion, he started singing the Todi Kriti of Swathi Tirunal, "*Sarasijanabhamurare*, and started expounding the line, '*Muravarida sameera mohana mani bhusha*' in Niraval. I was also seated there listening. He suddenly looked up at me and said "Uh, Paadu". I hesitated and expressed my incapability to elaborate like him, "Paadinal Varum". He goaded me to sing. I slowly picked up courage and started off. Mama interspersed in between, correcting me and explained the technique of Niraval singing. We thus sang Niraval and Swara alternately.

Seeing this, Vaitha Mama who was providing accompaniment on the Mridangam, called out to his student and asked him to rush to my father, appraise him and bring him along to hear this musical session. Appa came and heard us sing. At the end, Mama chided me saying "You could sing so well, but yet you were apprehensive. If you try you can sing, you may make a mistake, but definitely make an attempt".

If really was a memorable day in my life.

Another incident which I recall is, when Mama was taking one of his regular music classes at his Oliver Road home in Madras. Among the students present in the class was Smt. Mani Krishnaswamy, who is one of the respected lady musicians of today. She has even received the prestigious title "Sangita Kalanidhi" from the Madras Music Academy. Mama was teaching them *Vihara Manasa* in Kapi. On seeing me, Mama asked me to sit beside him and render the song. I had a thin voice those days and could produce the Brikkas and Uruttal Sangathis

with much ease. In fact, a lot of such Sangathis are employed in this song. On my singing every Sangathi, especially the Brikkas, Musiri Mama certified it by asking his pupils to take note of the Sangathi I sang and said it should be reproduced exactly the way I did. It was indeed a great tribute from such a great musician.

Many years later, I happened to attend Smt. Mani Krishnaswamy's concert at Bombay. When I went to greet her after the concert, she was overjoyed at seeming me and went on to say, that she had originally planned to render *Vihara Manasa* that day. But on seeing me present in the audience, decided to skip it, as she felt she would not be able to sing the way I did. She nostalgically recalled my version at that musical session in Musiri Mama's house.

Once Maharani Sethu Parvati Bai (Chitra Tirunal's mother) insisted that I sing the Trivandrum National Anthem - *Vanjeesha Mangalam*, which was played everywhere those days like *Jana Gana Mana*, our country's National Anthem. Although my father suggested other names, the Maharani finally told him that she wanted only me to sing. Later it was Musiri Mama who spoke to the authorities of the Columbia Record Company and to Shri Malyappa Chettiar, a business man who probably was the sponsor, and arranged for my first recording with this company. Both Mama and Appa decided that I should sing a few other pieces too and not *Vanjeesha Mangalam* alone. This was my first break and I cut my first disc at the age of 15.

I had the opportunity to attend many of Mama's concerts. His concert planning was good. I liked Mama's style of singing. His voice suited to the Gamaka style, he was adept at Manodharma and specialised in Kritis which were suited to Vilamba Kalam. He loved singing in the Vilamba Kalam and the music was really melodious. He laid emphasis on the Bhava aspect, both in Raga, and Sahitya, i.e., Bhava-laden music, which was also rich in Bhakti. His music portrayed both these vital aspects in their true import.

He was equally proficient in voice modulation. Apart from this, Mama was a teacher non pareil, a strict disciplinarian, who made it a point to teach me a song or two and wanted me to learn from him, every time he came to Trivandrum. His teaching can be condensed in few words - learning, listening, assimilation, imbibe and perform. He insisted that every student of his should cultivate his own style and believed in Sadhakam.

My father, also an ardent admirer of Musiri Mama purchased immediately on release all his records/discs and wanted me to learn all the songs therein. I learnt everything and got it approved by Mama himself, *Nagumomu*, *Thiruvadi Charanam*, *Amba Nannubrova*, *Pahi Ramachandra*, *Entavedukundu* and the *Virutham* - *Virutha Chenjadaiyada* were some of the few I learnt from his discs, which I render in Musiri Mama's inimitable style.

Unlike many musicians those days, Musiri Mama was educated. He spoke fluent English, his language lucid, combined with eloquent expression. He even worked in an office before finally leaving his job to take to full time music. A man of cool and unruffled temperament, Mama was always reposeful and did everything with dignity.

His Guru was Shri Karur Chinnasami Iyer who, I remember, has also stayed at our house in Trivandrum. He came along with Shri Kandasamy Iyer who was a violinist and a relative of Lalgudi Jayaraman. I still remember the remark Shri Kandasamy Iyer made about my music, that I had a unique style with an individuality of my own, which did not resemble any particular style of music. Mention should also be made of Mama's other Guru Sabesa Iyer, who was instrumental in shaping him into a fine musician.

Musiri Mama was a man of few words and never talked much. The little that he would speak was always to the point. Like his music exposition, he spoke very slowly and softly, but clearly. A traditionalist in all ways, he kept a 'Kudumi'

too. Very affectionate, by nature, as far as I know he was a very good person too. A gentleman - musician. Even Mami was of a good nature, but unfortunately they had no children. Musiri Mama adopted Tyagu, his elder brother's son as his own. This brother and his wife also stayed with him.

I am indeed very lucky and look back with pride too, in having been associated with such a towering personality, and to have learnt music directly from this great man. I am really fortunate.

- Kamala Krishnamoorthy

Guru Inspires And Leads

The real Guru not only bestows knowledge and activates the intellect of his disciple but mesmerises to perform and succeed. Our epics depict the magnificent lives of Valmiki, Viswamitra, Drona, Kripa, Chanakya, Ramadasa, Vidyaranya and a host of other absorbing colossuses. Here is an episode concerning Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati Swamikal of Kanchi :

Pradosha Stotra beautifully connects gods with individual musical instruments. Even so, Sambhu Natana Ashtakam of Pantanjali describes Tandavam (Dance of Siva). Its formation and mode present an illusion of one witnessing the dance before him. I had a desire to present Nitya to Lord Chandramouliswara during Pradosha pooja. I asked the Mutt Vidwan (Sri vanjam Ramachandra Ayyar) to do the Abhinaya. He got frightened since he had no training whatsoever in dancing.

"Do not be afraid. Think of Nataraja and dance even as the potter dances on clay to make it pliable and throw up your hands freely. All will come up well, I encouraged him."

With Suddha Maddalam and blowing of conch, the dance came out very well. I felt that the efficacy of the pooja got elevated".

This absolutely proves what and how a great guru could draw out of his disciple what he wants. Tiger Varadachariar had to force S. V. Parthasarathy, his disciple to lend voice-support at his concert. Having coaxed him to do so, during the concert, he turned back and bade him to continue the song from where he left. The young disciple was nervous to do the solo. With mock anger, Tiger frowned and hissed out :

"You fellow, in another four months, you are going to pass your examination. Then you will become even my competitor! Come on, sing!"

The lad gathered strength and delighted his guru and the audience. The first solo exposure was indeed a success, avers Parthasarathy!

"He is no disciple who does not excel his master", observed a writer. How many had excelled!

Courtesy : "Yet Another Garland"

Sangita Kalanidhi - Elect

T. K. Govinda Rao

(In a tete - a - tete & Workshop)

(SHANMUKHA congratulates the renowned musician-performer - teacher - compiler Shri T. K. Govinda Rao on his being selected for the title of Sangita Kalanidhi of the Music Academy, Madras, for this year.

Following is the text of a tete-a-tete our correspondent Smt. Lalitha A. Bharadwaj, a Vainika, had with him during his recent visit to this metropolis, and a report on a workshop, "Raga Swaroopam" he conducted under the aegis of Fine Arts Society, Chembur.)

Hailing from a family of musicians and music lovers, Vidvan T. K. Govinda Rao was initiated into music at the tender age of 3. His early training began under his own cousin Shri Mani Bhagavathar of Coimbatore. Later, in the year 1949, he joined the Central College of Carnatic Music, Madras where he completed the course of "Sangita Vidvan".

After college Shri Govinda Rao continued his rigorous training under Padmavibhushan, Sangita Kalanidhi Musiri Subrahmanya Iyer for 15 years in private Gurukulavasam tradition. It was the great Musiri who introduced him to the music world through public performances. Govinda Rao later taught at the Tamil Nadu Government Music College, Madras. He also worked as Producer-Music, All India Radio, Madras from 1983 onwards and retired in 1991 as the Chief Producer of Music, A.I.R. Directorate General, New Delhi.

He has been associated with the Music Academy, Madras as a member of the Advisory Committee, Central Sangeet Natak Akademy and Indian Council for Cultural Relations. He has worked in the Universities of Banares, Delhi, Madras, Annamalai, Bangalore and Telugu University in various capacities. In addition, he has taught countless students all over India and places abroad like Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, U. K., U.S.A., Canada and Muscat.

Q: Can you tell us how you decided to take up music as a career ?

"..... At the age of ten, I performed at the Annual Chitra Tirunal Festival - Trivandrum. This was conducted by Prof. R. Srinivasan. The best performer in the whole festival was awarded a Gold Medal. I was lucky to be selected for the prestigious prize and given the chance to sing in the Travancore Broadcasting Corporation. I also happened to sing before the great Tiger Varadachari who very-readily called me to join the three-year course at Kalakshetra. But soon I got the opportunity to sing before Musiri Subrahmanya Iyer, who admitted me in the fourth year course at the Central College of Carnatic Music where he was the Principal. I did my two years' training there and had the great opportunity of being under the guidance of T.Brinda and Tiruppambaram Swaminatha Pillai....."

Q. Who played the major role in making you a music maestro?

"...All the credit to my achievements as a musician goes to Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar, Musiri Subramanya Iyer and Swaminatha Pillai...."

Q: How do you describe Karnatic Classical Music? Is it essential to know the meanings of each composition one learns?

"...Our music is composition-oriented and not based on mere musical scales. The Sahitya in each Kriti brings out the Bhava or the essence which in turn infuses beauty into the exposition. Without knowing the meanings of the Sahitya, one cannot bring out this beauty. Thus we get music which is divine and pleasing and expressing all the nuances of the Bhava or meanings and not mere music or tune..."

The Vidwan demonstrated Tyagaraja Kriti - 'Orachupu juchedi nyayama.' He showed how one should modulate the voice when singing this line which means 'is it justified - O Rama' when you sneeringly look through the corner of your eyes? Thus if one sang without knowing the meaning, this Bhava cannot be brought out. Then it is no longer a composition but a mere musical tune."

Q: We have 72 Mela Ragas but very few musicians attempt the rarer ones, why?

"...There are these 'Purva Prasiddha Ragas' which have sailed through generations and been tempered and polished to perfection. Then we have those artificially created ragas to merely satiate the theoretical aspect. Thus the 72 melas are mere scales. Karnatic music has developed through the innumerable compositions of our great composers and not through scales. Hence Bhakti Bhava played a major role in the development of certain established Ragas like Kalyani, Sankarabharanam, Bhairavi and so on. We see this natural flow only in these few Ragas..."

The artiste humorously added that "...once a rare raga is sung often and subsequently becomes popular, it no longer remains rare but becomes an established Raga..."

Q: How does one perfect Raga Alapana?

"...Learn as many Kritis as you can in the same Raga. This will help one to perfect the Raga Chaya and help the musician to maintain its texture and purity. For eg; Tyagaraja has composed around 18 Kritis and Dikshitar around 7 Kritis in the same Raga Bhairavi. But one will observe that each Kriti manifests itself in different beautiful forms of Bhairavi according to its Bhava but strictly within the framework of this Raga, thus enlightening us on the different styles of handling the Raga without compromising on its purity. This is like 'unity in diversity'. Hence any Raga can be mastered by learning multiple Kritis in it..."

Q: Ragam-Thanam-Pallavi is usually considered as a yardstick to judge a musician's capacity. What is your opinion?

"...Indian music is basically creative. A musician's ultimate aim is to become a creative artiste. At the same time, ours is traditional music and not innovative as it is based on the compositions by our great composers. Pallavi is the Navaneetham or 'cream' of all the knowledge we have gained from these compositions. Pallavi is creative music personified. In a Pallavi, one can sing everything without having to give importance to anything in particular. Only it should be simple and easily comprehensible by the listeners. Unlike a composition wherein Bhava plays a major role and thus traditional and less innovative, in a Pallavi an artiste can unleash his/her creative capacity to full strength. But at the same time, no compromise should be made on the particular Sthanas of the Sahitya Bhavas. That is, each word (Akshra) in the Pallavi should be sung on the particular finger count or beat and not

extended or placed anywhere or everywhere in the rhythmic cycle. Otherwise the whole beauty of the Pallavi will be lost and the result will be utter confusion.

Q: What is your observation of the present day younger generation of musicians?

"... I am very happy to note that the present generation of young musicians are very enthusiastic. But somehow they lack the traditional way of delivering Ragas in terms of Bhava. They should realise that our music is vocal-oriented. Human emotions and feelings have been entwined in the Kritis. Thus our music becomes Kriti-oriented. They also tend to imitate an instrument in their eagerness to sing fast Brigas, with the result that there is lack of feeling in the rendering. Technically they may capably handle the different octaves and pitches but the entire effort lacks in bringing out the true Bhava or essence of the rendering..."

Q: What would be your advice to them?

"... They should learn more and more great compositions sincerely. This will help them understand our great heritage and the beauty of the Ragas as handled by our composers in their various Kritis. This will teach them to handle a Raga with feeling and induce dignity and poise in the Alapana. Also they should concentrate more on Sarvalagu Swaras than on 'Vyavahara Swaras' in their Manodharma Swaras. Mere calculations and highly technical rhythmic circles may only awe the audience but not bring them close to the artiste."

Q: How do you rate the present day audience?

We have both entertainment music played to satisfy the lay man and cham-

-ber music for the knowledgeable few. However, if music is sung with Bhava and purity, an artiste can capture the hearts of any type of listeners.

Q: Do you approve of fusion music?

Our classical music is so gigantic and magnanimous, that fusing it with other systems is not necessary. That is my personal opinion.

Q: You have started the Ganamandir Trust. Can you enlighten us on this?

Ganamandir Trust is open to all for one-time donation of Rs.3000/-. This income is totally spent on music publications and CD's and given to all donors free. Already books containing Kritis of Tyagaraja, Dikshitar, Syama Sastri - Subbaraya Sastri and Annasvami Sastri, Varnamanjari, etc., have been published both in National and International scripts viz., Devanagari and Diacritical Roman to reach the maximum people all over the world. All our valuable patrons are proud owners of these books. I am now busy on other music-oriented projects. I also keep myself occupied with workshop projects for interested students."

Q: You are starting an Internet Website?

"...Yes. Please visit our website - www.ganamandir.com on which we have the pleasure of starting music lessons form 'Vijayadasami' day this year. Musicians, music lovers and students of music can click around to view music books, music lessons, index of composers, etc. They can also become members through credit cards for a minimum fee to download required musical information. All the necessary details can be obtained from the above website. Also my E-mail address is : tkgovindarao@vsnl.com."

Once my website is fully equipped, I propose to keep touring around the world and hold workshop sessions to spread my experience and knowledge to as many students as possible. This will be my humble contribution to music."

Thus my interview with the music genius ended here. All of us would rejoice to note that in addition to the countless invaluable Gems of awards on his Crown of Glory - like - "Sangita Chudamani", 'Sangita Sastra Ratnakara', 'Ganakalatilaka', 'Nadakkanaal', 'Swaras Samrat', 'Sangita Acharya', award from the Central Sangeeth Natak Akademi, 'Saptagiri Sangeeta Vidwanmani' from the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam, etc., Shri T. K. Govinda Rao has just recently been selected for the title of 'Sangita Kalanidhi' by Music Academy, Madras, which will be awarded to him during the December'99 Music Festival. This incidentally happens to be the centenary year of his Guru Shri Musiri Subrahmanya Iyer.

We congratulate him on his great achievements and pray that the Almighty bless him with a long and healthy life to fulfil his wish of becoming a roaming ambassador of music and continue with his invaluable contribution to the music world.

Fine Arts Society, Chembur, arranged a workshop session on the 21st of August'99, aptly named - **Raga Swaroopam**, by Shri T. K. Govinda Rao. The maestro took Ragas Bhairavi and Poorvikalyani for explanation and elaboration.

He began the 4-hour session with a brief explanation of the evolution of music. He said that in yonder days there were 'Dasaputas' who propagated 'Bhakti-bhava' through music and not just music.

Then came the Trinity, who through their compositions fostered divine Sahitya Bhava - oriented music. It is through these Kritis that

Ragas arose. Thus a Raga is not a mere combination of notes or scales but is enriched with Bhava. He claimed that music in true form has been heard first time only through the compositions of the Trinity, brought to us through their disciples. By merely listening to and repeating the same compositions, the student can slowly sing on his/her own. This is the right way to learn.

Old Ragas like Sankarabharanam, Bhairavi, Poorvikalyani, etc., are different from the new ragas which arose after the setting up of the 72 melas. They had 'Vakra Prayogas' and 'Anyaswaras' too. The 72 mela scales are based on Swaras which are mathematically calculated. Swara-based music is technically perfect but one cannot sing creative music which is the main element of Indian music.

According to him, only these old Ragas have a heart-capturing aspect as emotions and feelings emanate from them. Bhava Sangeetham comes from the heart whilst mathematical Sangeetham merely based on Arohanam, Avarohanam, comes from the brain. He told the listeners that his Guru Shri Musiri Subrahmanya Iyer would humorously refer to a mathematically scaled Raga as - *'operation is successful but the patient is dead'* - meaning - though the Raga may have been sung to technical perfection, it has failed to touch the heart of the singer as well as the listener.

Also, in our music system, we have natural Gamakas which are given to suitably bring out the Raga's beauty. How is this successfully done? By studying their utilisation in the various compositions. A Raga gives musical form and exposes human feelings. Our composers sang their feelings through the Sahitya. Hence the Raga of each of their compositions was chiselled out to give a perfect form to their emotions which they wished to reveal.

Govinda Rao quoted Swami Dayananda Saraswati's description of our classical music as follows **"Colloquialism plays a great role in our music"**. Thus we see that Tyagaraja has

used simple spoken Telugu in all his compositions which makes it easy for a student to learn and sing.

Vocal music therefore is made up of the human element of emotions and feelings which is expressed through the Sahitya. One must first understand the mood of the composition through the meanings and then sing it accordingly to bring out the relevant Bhava.

Raga Bhairavi, the Vidwan explained, is a very old Raga. Its Arohanam is - **'SRGMPDNS'** and Avarohanam **'SNDPMGRS'**, **'SGRG'** is the prayoga. Tyagaraja has composed around 18 Kritis and Muthuswamy Dikshitar around 7 Kritis in Bhairavi. Though this Raga is considered to be the Janya of Natabhairavi (20th Mela), many students have queried why not place it under 22nd, ie., Kharaharapriya, as it has Chatusruthi Dhaivatha in the Arohana.

The artiste beautifully clarified this point by showing through his demonstration that Suddha Dhaivatha is actually present in the Arohana though discreetly than Chatusruthi Dhaivata. He specified that the Kaisiki Nishada gets its support from Suddha Dhaivatha in Arohana especially when we sing in a slow tempo, Chatusruthi Dhaivatha is used simply to add beauty. It is always the Kaisiki Nishada which we stress upon in Arohana. Hence we see that the 5th. (Panchama) and 7th. (Nishada) swaras are Vadi and Samvadi swaras respectively and play an important role.

He sang the famous Ata Tala Varanam - **'Viriboni'** - first in Swara form, then with Sahitya to show how the Bhava emanates from the composition only when the Sahitya is sung. Next he sang the same piece with and without Gamakas to show how the Raga has been shaped to give form to the Sahitya. For the Sahitya - **Sami Sree** (second half of the Anupallavi) - the Swaras - **PDNSRGMG** - the Dhaivatha is given Gamaka on Panchama and from here we go to Nishada. Therefore Chatusruthi Dhaivatha does not prominently feature.

He said a Raga Alapana also has 'Kalapramanam'. Just like if you unnecessarily drag your words and talk in slow tempo or just reel off your words in full speed it would sound funny and unclear, an Alapana too, if sung in a very slow tempo or in a very fast tempo, would sound awkward. It should be usually sung in medium pace with fast Brigas wherever required. This is because every Raga gets its Swaroopa from its particular compositions. The Kritis **'Koluvayyunade'**, for example, is paced to sound like a Tanam.

Difference also exists in the Prayoga of the Suddha Madhyama swara in the Raga Bhairavi. Whilst in the ascending order it moves closer to Panchama and thus sounds a bit higher in tone, in descending it tends to come down towards Sadharana Gandhara.

Thus the artiste emphasised on the fact that the Arohana Avarohana were only the skeletal framework. They only inform us as to what Swaras can be used in a particular Raga. Only the compositions teach us how to shape the Swaras to give form or Swaroopa to the Raga. He said :

"The swaras put our music in a workshop level whereas compositions polish our music and bring it to the showroom".

He sang Tyagaraja Kritis **'Upacharamulanu'** and **'Thanayuni'** with explanation of the meanings. He also noted that in this Raga, if we start from the Rishaba, then we have to stop on the Panchamam. Similarly, the Madhyama and Nishada are partners.

The next Raga was 'Poorvikalyani'. A janya of the 53rd mela Gamanashrama the Arohana is - **'SRGMPDPS'** and Avarohana - **'SNDPMGRS'**.

Here again, the artiste observed that we use - **'GMDS'** - in our Alapana though technically it differs from the set Arohana pattern. This is because we follow the prayogas in the compositions For eg., Swaras like - **'DNM-MDG-GMR'** -

or 'ND-NP-DM' or 'grndgr' - or - ndmg - dmgr - mgrs' are all few examples which we can gather only from their usage in the various compositions and not from the Arohana-Avarohanam.

He sang Dikshitar's - *Meenakshi Me Mudam Dehi* - in which he took up the Sahityam - *Marakatha chaye* - to show how the simple swaras - 'GMP' - is actually sung as - **G-GPM-P** - instead of plainly singing the Madhyama, it is swung inbetween two Panchamas to add beauty. This idea is revealed to us only while singing the composition wherein Swaras are used at strategic points according to the context of the Bhava.

He ended the session with a message to the younger generation that a vocalist should understand the Sahitya Bhava and sing accordingly. Once we delve into Bhakti in Sangeetham, we enter that phase of 'divine bliss' and totally forget ourselves. In fact, our health improves as during those moments we are free from all mental tensions.

On the next day, Govinda Rao gave a full-fledged programme of Swati Thirunal Kriti. He was also felicitated on his being selected for 'Sangita Kalanidhi' title of the Music Academy, Madras.

In addition to the various speeches given by their committee members, Dr. V. Subramaniam of Shanmukananda Sabha honoured the artiste with a crisp talk. Referring to Govinda Rao as the 'Utsava Moorthy' of the function, he said, the great musician has travelled across the field of music and added several aspects to his talents. He is a multi-faceted personality in the sense he is a singer, a compiler, an editor, a teacher, etc. It is, therefore, necessary that posterity should have record of his achievements, so we have his books on the various composers.

The programme started off with a rare Swati Thirunal Pada Varanam in Todi (Adi). The beauty of this piece lay in the fact that more than 30% comprised of Swaraaksharas. This was followed by 'Paramapurusha' (Vasanth) and Viharamanasa (Kapi). The Kapi alapana was beautifully woven out with meandering and swaying Gamakas, all assimilated from the composition as the artiste emphasised, and not from the mere knowledge of the Arohana-Avarohana.

'Rasavilasa' (Kambhoji) is a rare piece with Jathiswaras. Set to Adi Tala (2 Kalai), it has a peculiar Eduppu as the Kriti starts from the second half of the little finger.

Navarathri Kriti - '*Pahimam Shri Vageeshwari*' - (Kalyani) featured as the main piece with an elaborate Alapana and commendable Niraval - Swaras - followed by an appropriately chiselled out 'Thani' by Shri K. V. Maniappan on the Mridangam. The artiste concluded the session with a Bhajan - '*Caliye Kunjanamo* in Bridavan Sarang. He was all along given vocal support by his daughter Smt. Padmaja, Shri S. V. Ramachandran gave capable accompaniment on the violin with a mellowed bowing, without coming in the way of the main artiste.

Earlier, from 5.00 p.m. 6.30 p.m., Master Prasanna Venkatraman (disciple of Smt. T. R. Balamani), gave a grand vocal recital. Prasanna started off with a brisk Varnam in Kedaragowla, followed by *Siddhivinayaka Arulpurivai* (Nattai) and *Evarani* (Devamrutavarshini).

Ramapriya Alapana for Dikshitar's *Mathangi Sri Rajarajeshwari* - was elaborate with Neraval in 3 speeds and Manodharma swaras all well handled. *Balagopala* in Bhairavi was sung beautifully. This was followed by a scintillating Thani by Mridangist Shri K. V. Prasad. Throughout, Master V. Anand gave commendable violin support to match the strong voice of the vocalist.

A Son's Salutation

The Gentle Vaggeyakara of Mysore

By Dr. H. Y. Rajagopal

"When you think about him", observed my brother H. Y. Sharada Prasad, once in reference to our father, H. Yoganarasimham, "it is difficult to say whether it is emotion recollected in tranquillity or tranquillity recollected with emotion."

That about sums up my father. A scholar who was an artist at heart, he pursued music all his life not for any monetary gain or fame, but for inner light and peace, and to channel all his creative energies. Both tranquillity and emotion underline his compositions even as scholarship and a refined poetic sensibility lend substance and grace to his lyrics.

Born in 1897, the youngest of three brothers and a sister, he grew up in Mysore. His forefathers came from Holenarasipur, a place of pilgrimage on the banks of the graceful Hemavati, about forty miles from Mysore. Family lore tells of how my grandfather, Naranappa, driven by ambition to give himself an English education, stole four annas from the family kitty and a couple of *rotis* and walked the forty miles to Mysore. After matriculating from the high school, however, he did not continue his studies, but took a job instead to support himself and his family. When the old Mysore palace was destroyed in a fire and a new one was being built, he served as an accountant under the Chief Engineer. He had attained a great reputation for his integrity and scrupulousness in work.

My mother always remembered him as a gentle, kindly soul, a true *Sattvika*. However, music was not one of his talents, nor an art that he easily approved of as were the mores of the times.

Music came into the family through my grandmother who was a very talented woman.

and a forceful personality. She literally knew hundreds of songs. With her prodigious memory she could recall songs running into dozens of stanzas. She had seen the composer Mysore Sadasiva Rao and attended Narasimha Jayanti that he performed annually, and had even learnt some of his compositions. Her brother was a much decorated Harikatha Vidwan and his descendants are still distinguished in that art.

My father was an outstanding student and attained distinction at every level. After his matriculation, thanks to the unstinted support and encouragement of a very loving elder brother, he joined the Maharaja's College in Mysore, as one among the first batch of students entering the newly founded Mysore University. This was a period of intense intellectual development for him as he came under the influence of such eminent teachers as M. Hanayana and S. Radhakrishnan. He studied Sanskrit and Philosophy, and obtained a Master's degree in Sanskrit.

He later joined the Mysore Educational Service, serving as Principal of Maharaja's Sanskrit College, Music Examiner, High School Headmaster, and finally as District Educational Officer. Subsequently, he served the All India Radio, as Consultant and Producer of Educational Programmes and also as Producer of Sanskrit Programmes.

Throughout all this busy vocational activity, which he took quite seriously, his pursuit of the Muses never ceased. He had made a conscious decision not to make music a means of livelihood. Music was his first love and that is what brought him the greatest fulfilment in life.

Mysore of the olden days had much to offer for someone like him to absorb and cultivate

The royal court had such luminaries as Veena Seshanna, Bidaram Krishnappa and Vasudevacharya. The famed Dasara festival brought musicians from all over India to perform at the court. His sensitive mind was exposed to a great deal of good music. His scholarship of Sanskrit helped him gain a first hand knowledge of the basic texts which proved to be of great advantage. He did not appear to have gone to any particular Guru for his early training. With his innate talent he was able to teach himself music to a remarkable extent. Through constant listening, contemplation, practice and association with musicians and scholars, he acquired a highly refined as well as an individualistic sense of music. In this respect, his training as a musician was not traditional, but he had absorbed the best of the musical tradition, as his Kritis amply testify. He admired Bidaram Krishnappa greatly. "A voice like his could only be heard once in a century," he used to say. His personality was awe-inspiring, and his music "reminded him of an ocean".

My father filled his notebooks with Kirits noted after Bidaram's rendering. However, Vasudevacharya had a special appeal for him, probably because of similar temperaments, love of Sanskrit literature, and creativity. He went to him for advanced learning, but his discipleship with him was also not of the usual kind. I believe their relationship was more like a shared experience and exploration of music at a very advanced level, so much so that while my father revered him as his guru, Vasudevacharya himself regarded my father not simply as a sishya but as a 'good friend' ('Sanmitra'), as vouched by the inscription in his book *Sri Vasudeva Keertanamanjari* given by him to my father with 'love and gratitude'.

When it comes to music and Sanskrit, I am the proverbial "pandita putra". I never learned music systematically from him, but I am ever so grateful that due to him my mind was opened up to good music early in life. I would enjoy hours and hours of fine music while around him. He and some of his friends, like Rallapalli Anantha-

-krishna Sarma and N. Chennakesavayya, used to hold 'Bhajanas' by turns in their homes when a lot of discerning listeners used to congregate. These were extraordinary occasions when music in its purest form was offered in a spirit of dedication and enlightenment. Years later, when my father went to consult with Dr. B. K. Ramakrishna Rao, a noted Cardiologist of Mysore on a health problem, the latter recalled how he used to enjoy listening to my father's music during those Bhajanas, standing near a window in the courtyard.

Adventure in Todi

P. T. Narasimhachar, the great Kannada poet and creator of several fine operas, once told me of an occasion when he heard my father expound Todi at Rallapalli's house. He said it was 'an adventure in Todi'.

My father would take us with him to private musical gatherings where some of the most eminent musicians would be present. I remember an occasion when he took us to Vasudevacharya's house to listen to T. Chowdiah's violin. Vasudevacharya was a wonderful conversationalist, and would regale his listeners with many a humorous anecdote. His book *Na Kanda Kalavidaru*, in which he offers brilliant portraits of the musicians of his time, their whimsicality and frailties (including his own), is testimony to that colourful side of his personality.

He was an honoured visitor at our house on many an occasion, the last one being my elder sister's wedding. He was very fond of my mother's cooking and would enjoy a good meal thoroughly before settling down to a late afternoon's music session.

Another long-standing friend of my father was B. K. Padmanabha Rao, who was a lawyer by profession but who appeared to us to spend more time on music than on his profession. Once my father took us to listen to Tiger Varadachariar at his law chambers. That is when I first saw M. D. Ramanathan, an artist I came to admire

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Shri Mysore M. Manjunath - Violin

Shri Guruvayur Dorai - Mridangam

Shri Udupi Sridhar - Ghatam

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7-11-1999 Sunday

6.00 to 7.15 p.m.

Rendered by

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Smt. Bhavani Srinivasan

Smt. Renuka Rajan

Shri S. V. Ramachandran

Shri Sriram Suryanarayan

- Vocal

- Violin

- Mridangam

7.20 to 9.00 p.m.

Shri G. S. Mani (Mumbai)

(Shri Mani is a former student of Shanmukhananda Sangeetha

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Shri S. V. Ramachandran

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	6.30 p.m.	Pandit Birju Maharaj with Ustad Zakir Hussain	- Kathak
19-12-1999	Sunday	Pandit Shivkumar Sharma	- Santoor
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greatly in later years. Tiger was a musicians' musician. I remember how the musicians gathered there that day enjoyed themselves.

Veena Venkatagiriappa was another great friend whom he would often visit. I remember going with him on a couple of occasions and listening to V. Doreswami Iyengar play to his Guru. S. Parthasarathy (formerly of The Hindu) records an incident narrated by his wife Ranganayakamma who was also a student of Venkatagiriappa. She was once present at her Guru's house when my father gave a short music recital. Parthasarathy writes :

"It appears he sang Amritavarshini Raga followed by a Kriti with such Sruti Suddhi that tears welled up in the eyes of the listeners. Legend has it that Sri Muthuswami Dikshitar rendered this Raga and heavy rains poured on the parched countryside of Tirunelveli District...."

Whether rains really came or not is perhaps immaterial. The feeling is real. I would never doubt that Dikshitar's music would have drenched the parched souls of the land in a downpour of pure joy. On several occasions V. Doreswami Iyengar had recalled how his Guru used to be overwhelmed with joy at my father's music.

We would have musical sessions at home when some of my father's friends would visit him. I can never forget the visits of Parthasarathy and Ranganayakamma. They were much younger than my father but music bound them together. They would come once a year or so and stay for a week, and it would be a week-long music festival at home.

They had been closely associated with Dr. Srinivasa Raghavan of Madras, a medical doctor who was a great Tyagaraja devotee. For twelve years the Parthasarathys had joined him in his worship and had acquired a very large repertoire of Tyagaraja Kritis. It was through them that I heard some of the rare Kritis of Tyagaraja like *Sornpaina (Tshallare-Ahin)*, which have since become popular. My sister Neeraja had the privilege of learning many Kritis from them.

After the hustle and bustle of Government service, my father devoted himself completely to Sanskrit studies and music. A musical mind ripened by long years of contemplation was now becoming impatient to express itself creatively. He began composing and became totally absorbed in it. He composed in Sanskrit, Kannada, and Telugu, using many diverse genres. He used not only the great Ragas of Kamatak music like Begada and Sankarabharanam, but also some very rare ones like Latantapriya, Kuntalakusumavali, and Bhanudhanyasi

Critics have hailed the Kritis in these latter Ragas as definitive works that have established the form of these Ragas. Both musicians and critics have been struck by the structure and beauty of his compositions as well as their emotional appeal. M. S. Subbulakshmi has brought out a cassette of some of his Kritis. When that was in preparation, Sadasivam sent a letter to my brother telling him how much they and Semmangudi and Veezhinathan (Professor of Sanskrit at Madras University) had enjoyed the poetry of the Ranjani Kriti '*Sadasaranganayane*'

During the same period, I had the privilege of visiting the Sadasivams. It had been an unforgettable experience for me. I came out of the visit feeling that Subbulakshmi was the most beautiful person I had met in life. She seemed like art come to life.

My father's compositions were published in book form in 1980 under the title '*Gita-Kusumanjali*', with a fine introduction by V. Sitharamayya, one of the most highly respected teachers and writers, a connoisseur of music and fine arts, and a friend of my father from college days. Also contained in it are reminiscences and tributes by some of his friends and admirers. One notable tribute comes from U. R. Anantha Murthy, the Jnanpith Laureate and President of Sahitya Academy, who was my father's student at the Tirthahalli High School. He says that as his teacher, my father exerted a very profound influence on him, and that it was he who opened the gates of literature and introduced him to the

world of Shakespeare and the *Bhagavadgita*.

At home with Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti, Shakespeare and Milton, Tyagaraja, Jayadeva and Purandara, my father had imbibed the best of literary and musical traditions. He always emphasized purity of content and form, simplicity and restraint in expression. Sruti Suddhi, Laya Suddhi, Bhava Suddhi, and Vak Suddhi - all were very important. Sometimes he would spend an hour tuning his *Tambura* and we youngsters would get impatient and wonder whether he was ever going to sing. How important Sruti was for him became manifest in another illuminating way. He was composing music to Kalidasa's *Sakuntalam*, which he produced for All India Radio and in which he played the role of Kanva himself. This was something closest to his heart and he wanted to bestow on it all the love and

I do not remember all the Slokas he set to music or all the Ragas he had used, but I recall he sang one Sloka in Kharaharapriya and another in Suddhadhanyasi. Unfortunately, in those days radio programmes were not recorded and we will never hear his rendering of those Slokas again. V. Sitharamayya notes in one of his books that in the old Mysore State he had not heard any other musician render Sanskrit Slokas as well as Vasudevacharya and my father.

In addition to his own compositions, his contributions to Karnatak music include the two volumes of music he and his colleagues at Sangita Kalabhivardhini Sabha in Mysore edited. The first volume was a collection of the Kritis of Mysore Sadasiva Rao, and the second a collection of Veena Seshanna's Kritis.

Uniqueness of Yoganarasimham's Compositions

Shri T. Sadasivam in a message to Shri H. Y. Sharada Prasad has said :

Subbulakshmi had the opportunity to render a few of Shri Yoganarasimham's compositions on HMV LP / Cassette a few years ago. Shri Yoganarasimham had in fact composed quite a number of songs including Tana-Varnams, Swarajatis, Tillanas and Padas.

His compositions are noted not only for their lyrical beauty but also for bringing out the full beauty and form of the Raga in which they were set by him - whether in Ghana Ragas like Sankarabharanam, Kambhoji, Kalyani or Mohanam or in the very uncommon Ragas like Bhanudhanyasi, Latantapriya etc. The majesty as well as originality of each composition is unique.

His contribution to the enrichment of classical Carnatic music is definitely significant and therefore his creations will be used, nurtured and propagated by all young musicians in future.

care he could. In the serenity of the night, with lights turned off, he would go on plucking his finely tuned *Tambura* until the sound filled the whole house and his being. Sometimes he would even lay the *Tambura* on his chest as if to let the sound travel through every particle of his body and let every nerve resonate with the sound. After a long while, a Raga would emerge, one that was most appropriate for the literary content and the mood of the Sloka.

This Sabha, of which he was a founding member and later president, was dedicated to encouraging and developing local musical talent. He also served on the Central Advisory Board for Music and in various advisory capacities for All India Radio.

He was a quiet, unassuming man. He never pushed himself into limelight. Music to him was a liberator, a gentle force that refined one's

soul and elevated it to a higher plane. Personally, he was greatly influenced by Tyagaraja's philosophy of music, although he was a great admirer of Muthuswami Dikshitar and had a very deep understanding of his work, especially the Navagraha Kritis.

His lectures on Tyagaraja were engrossing, which he used to illustrate by singing carefully selected parts of the Kritis. To the listeners, it would be like a rediscovery of Tyagaraja. He was a soft-spoken man but insisted on high standards not only of himself but of others also. His fastidiousness and insistence on quality would even cause occasional unpleasantness among his associates. B. V. K. Sastry of Bangalore, the reputed music critic, has noted that when my father was present in the audience, the musicians used to be a little extra careful with their performance.

My father would have liked to live in the quiet of Mysore till his end. Mysore had given him so much that had become part of him, its dignity and serenity, its scholarship and artistry. But unfortunately that was not to be. The family had moved to Bangalore in order to be able to give him the care that he needed. There he passed away in May 1971. A life dedicated to the adoration of the Muses ended peacefully. Surrounded by his family, friends and admirers, I can never forget the serenity, grace and goodness that emanated from him.

From his death bed, he composed a song 'Arbhakagitam' a salutation to the new generation, his own grandchildren and children everywhere. Opening with the words 'Namo arbhakebhya' and set to Ragamalika, the song expresses his hope for posterity, and wishes everyone a life of great deeds, contemplation, music and poetry.

Courtesy : "Bhavan's Journal"

Sine quo non

A Sanskrit verse indicates the attributes a good bride should possess. Could not the same verse be applied to indicate the essential attributes of Classical music which would command a good audience at concerts? Here it is :

Attributes	Original for the bride	Modified for Music
Seva-service and devotion	Karyeshu Dasi	Karyeshu raga and laya
Guidance - advice	Karaneshu Mantri	Karaneshu Lakshana
Beauty - looks	Roopeshu Lakshmi	Roopeshu Sahitya
Generosity - forgiveness	Kshamava Danti	Kshamava Lakshya
Sensuality	Cayaneshu Vesya	Cayaneshu neo-classicals
	Samadharma vukta	Sama anga bhalita
	Kuladharm pathni	Sogasuga Sanqita

- Courtesy : "A Garland"

Aggressive, Explosive, LoudGoes the Music

One wonders what the state of Karnatic Music will be in the next five years. Will the rich heritage handed over to us by our forefathers be preserved or presented the way it really ought to be? Or will our music be on the wane, as many oldies claim? In fact, the older group of rasikas are none-too-happy with the present state of our music. This definitely is a thought "provoking subject and has presently become a debatable one too. The theme of many musical seminars today revolves around this much" discussed topic.

Thinking aloud, the task of preserving our Sampradaya and swearing by integrity to classicism undoubtedly is an arduous one, considering the scenario in which our musicians perform today. Very few succeed, and they are the ones who have realised music in all its greatness and grandeur.

This task is a highly responsible one, as it requires one to hold steadfastly to musical values and confine oneself totally to tradition. A self-effacing approach is another vital aspect. Austere discipline, but at the same time artistic and creative ability to be expressive, plus giving a definite character to music are also a must. Denying oneself to self-indulgent artistry in the name of one's own style is the next to be borne in mind. Concentration is another prerequisite.

This word 'style' does mean a lot and Karnatic Music is acceptable to this concept of style. But when there is an overdose, i.e., when one articulates one's artistic abilities beyond limits, trying to decorate music with an intention to appeal, does music lose its personality. This problem can be overcome only when on exhibiting one's skill, one also portrays total surrender that devotion to tradition really implies.

If musicians were to give this a serious thought, one can be sure that both traditional

context and colour will be distinct, but is sure to crumble if one is to indulge in personal inventiveness, which may also represent a violent fight, between the mind and the voice. Tradition then will surely occupy a second place and music lose its classical appeal and become just an exhibitionistic or theatrical art, with the deep soul-stirring experience associated with it, surely missing.

This will have to be constantly remembered by today's youngsters who are capable of giving successful concerts. As one notices, there is definitely an upsurge in the number of concert performing artists, with many youngsters taking onto the stage. There is no dearth of talent, but one only ponders whether all of them are ready for the take-off.

Gone are those days, when students were carefully groomed, fostered and also dissuaded to climb the platform till they were fully equipped to meet the demands of the stage. The scenario today is rather alarming and we come across artistes who still cannot be called full-fledged performers. There is also a sea-change in musical taste and it has not all been for the better. This is also a topic worth discussing and needs analysis.

One other aspect which needs to be dealt in detail is Rasa. The varieties of Rasa, have been on the decline and what constitutes today's music is by and large tempo and impact. This idea of music is gaining ground and is now becoming a standard. The sound levels soar on the concert platform. And what little variety that is offered today is the varying levels of vigour which have taken precedence over variety, which is the outcome of the various colours of musical artistry.

Sensitive music has been literally sacrificed and every artist is engaged in cultivating a robust style of exposition, as he has no choice

if he has to thrive. Thus, the implied undertones to this situations is the principle that loudness is the means of expression. In the process, it is loudness that prevails, which is very hard on the sensitive ear. The main performer has to meet the challenge of being forceful in the company of his accompanists. Music may thus end up being painful and true Rasikas may regret on having to sit through or attending concerts by musicians who are lionising the anguished tone.

In days of yore, it was a mikeless era and musicians had to sing open-throated, to produce more volume, in order to reach the farther sections of the audience. But with the advent of mikes and with the introduction of hi-fi mikes and amplification systems today, even the slightest sound gets amplified to such an extent, which probably could create a marring effect too. And it is very much true that without audibility there is no aesthetic sense. Thus it is imperative, that performers today will have to develop a mike-sense, coupled with good voice culture, which should be in accordance with our musical aesthetics., all of which are today becoming the other extra attributes a musician should possess to ensure overall enhancement to one's performance.

But this is not the end of the road for performers who still aspire to project the subtle niceties of music, epitomizing its vast richness and predominantly giving delicate artistry its due. This is what art music really means, but this is not much sought after, rather in less demand today, in view of the trend set giving undue importance to aggressive and explosive music. But these are the accepted features of Karnatic Music today. Instead one would be happier, if a common technique of excellence is acquired through proper voice culture, as in its absence our music has to depend more on *Gnanam* (musical insight) alone for excellence, which concretely analysed means failure of musical awareness and faulty musical vision.

Instead the pursuit of aesthetic values in music with total dedication and sincerity is sure to produce refined music of the highest order. This is a very hard task to achieve, as our music is too deep to fathom. And with these goals in mind, if the musician persistently goad himself and continues relentlessly his pursuit to preserve classicism and its integrity, he is sure to succeed and would have really contributed something in return to this great art.

- Seekari

Composers Spouses

This book (*A Garland*) brings to focus a galaxy of composers, musicians and musicologists. Fortunately, thanks to the urban orientation, women play a great role now. It was not so before. Even now there are few lady composers. The immortals of yester years except a few like Gopala Krishna Bharati had their spouses, who had participated in the spiritual, religious and artistic endeavours of their husbands quite in keeping with the tradition and heritage of Bharath. But little is known of their lives or their contribution.

Jayadeva's case was unique. When Kshetragna got the inspiration to satisfy the stipulation of his lady-love, Mohanangi, he realised that the transformation in him was because of her and so chose to call her 'sister'. The opposite occurred in the life of Swami Narayana Tirtha, who sought to forget his vow of renunciation. But his devout wife saw in him only a sanyasi and thus saved him from a moral disaster which would have deprived the world of the magnificent opera '*Krishna Lila Tarangini*'. Thimmakka Annamacharya was among the few exceptions in authoring works. Others had been probably fighting against the clock and the calendar to render service to their Lords' to relieve them of homely cares and worries. They drew inspiration from the epics to guide their lives.

It is worthwhile a full-scale research is taken up to assess and bring to light their noble roles, homely joys and obscure destiny.

Courtesy : "*A Garland*"

Rural Entertainment over the Centuries

By Bapurao S. Naik

Keertan is a form of narration and also a sort of lecture coupled with music and dancing. It seems to have been developed from the very early epic recitation of Kusha and included an exposition of philosophy by the writers of the *Upanishads*. A philosophy of life was the subject of very early Marathi literature, the oldest specimen being the *Vivekasindhu* of Mukundaraj (1128 to 1198) and the commentary on *Bhagavad Gita* by Dnyaneshwar (1275 to 1296). The Sanskrit epics, *puranas* and *kavyas* were translated or adapted into Marathi verse by Shridhar, Eknath, Mukteshwar, Moropant, Waman Pandit and others. Narrative poems were also written on the model of the Sanskrit *Kavyas* of Kalidas, *Magha* etc., by Raghunath Pandit, Vitthal, Samaraj and Waman Pandit. The commentary on the 10th book of *Bhagavata Purana* written by Eknath had become the gospel of the Bhagavat cult in Maharashtra since the 15th century.

Maratha Origin

The institution of narrating old tales and discussing the merits of virtue and dangers of vice is very old. It seems that during the 14th and 15th centuries the Marathi religious leaders resorted to story telling (*akhyan*) for explaining the philosophy of Bhagavat Dharma which they wanted the people to accept. The ancient tales were recited and explained to the gatherings of devotional minded Marathas by *puranikas* and *Haridasas*, the counterparts of the *Granthikas* of Patanjali. The kings, chiefs of petty states, landlords, businessmen etc., used to employ full-time narrators for reciting and narrating the epic and *puranas* to them. Almost all the early Marathi authors of narrative poetry were patronised by the wealthy Marathas. The writings of the famous Marathi saint-poets referred to above have served as treasures for the *puranikas* and *Haridasas*, who travelled from place to place giving recitals and expositions. The elements of

singing and a little of dance seem to have been borrowed from popular modes of entertainment such as *Lalit* and *gondhal* in vogue at that time. The new form of philosophical instruction, thus made entertaining, soon became known as *Keertan*. It is now almost five centuries old and can be called a purely Maharashtrian creation.

Practically in every town in the Maharashtra countryside *Keertan* is performed in the temples every year on occasions such as the birthdays of Rama or Krishna or other annual festivals particularly during *Chaturmasa* (August to November) or even otherwise in honour of the presiding deities of the temples. Wealthy landlords and tradesmen also arrange *Keertans* on special occasions. The narrator, i.e., the *Keertankar*, who performs the *Keertan* is called a *Haridas*, servant of Hari or Vishnu, or Haradas, that of Shiva. The *Haridas* stands in the centre on one side of the *Sabhamandap*, the temple assembly hall facing the image, with his assistants by his sides and at his back. The common accompaniments are the *Tabla* usually on his left, the *Tambora* or *Ekatar* and *Cymbals* played by his assistants standing at the back. The *Haridas* himself plays *Chipali*, two wooden blocks carved in the forms of fish and held through brass rings.

'Nirupan', The Purvarang

Keertan is divided into two parts. The first is called *purvarang* or *nirupan* and the second is known as *Uttararang* or *Akhyana*. The *Purvarang* begins with prayers and benedictory songs and the *Haridas* then discusses some ethical doctrine in detail quoting the scriptures, *Gita*, *Upanishads* and other treatises on philosophy such as *Yoga-Vashishta*, *Shankarabhashya* and also the sayings of Marathi or Hindi saints. Devotional songs are sung and during the *Bhajan* the *Haridas* undertakes a sort of dance, the audience accom-

-panying him in choral singing with clapping of hands. The *Nirupan* lasts for about an hour for it is not palatable to the mixed audiences of women and youngsters. In the second part the *Haridas* illustrates the subject discussed by him, by telling a story from the epics, *puranas* and the lives of the saints. Narrative poetry in Sanskrit as well as that of Marathi poets is always drawn upon. The storytelling is made interesting by singing songs accompanied by instrumental music and realistic touch is given when part of the story, particularly climaxes, are told in dialogues spoken by the *Haridas* himself. The dialogue used, assisted by appropriate gestures and movements, is most expressive. A clever *Haridas* depicts the incidents skilfully, often modulating his tone and expressing evocatively suitable to the moods in the story and creates an illusion of unfolding the events before the audience.

Instructive & Entertaining

The *Haridasas* are almost invariably singers well-versed in classical music. If they are not, they take the help of good singers to sing the songs for them. The songs are either devotional or illustrative of the story, sometimes supposed to have been sung by the characters in the story. Many of the early *Haridasas* were Sanskrit scholars, poets and composers. They used to rewrite the stories in their own words and in verse and also compose songs for the *Keertan*.

The story-telling in the *Keertan* actually takes the form of a play-reading with explanations in between. The dialogue here is extempore and spoken by one man. They spring from the imagination of the *Haridas* who has a perfect grasp of the story that is being told. There is humour, wit, mimicry, rebukes to the ill-behaved and an appeal to the sentiment of the audience.

Keertan is thus a dramatic representation of the 'arena' type, if it can be so called, both instructive and entertaining. It is performed without scenic aids, and all themes, tragic, comic, heroic and the like, which are admitted in drama, are within the ambit of *Keertan*.

The farmer and the soldier in Maharashtra have always been fascinated by the ballads composed in honour of great men and based on important incidents from their lives. The inhabitants of the Maharashtra hinterland have been hard-working people and have no time and energy to indulge in pleasures other than singing devotional songs (*Bhajan*), or attending *Keertans* and listening to the singing of ballads and love songs (*Lavanis*). "The ballads of the Marathas are ballads of the men of Maharashtra (the 'great nation')." says H. A. Ackworth, "and burn through and through with patriotic fervour. The times that gave birth to them have passed away, but they keep alive that love for the scenes and institutions of their country which is so conspicuous among the Marathas."

The *Gondhal* (literally meaning confusion) in Maharashtra is as old as the worship of the goddesses, Amba-Bhavani. It is a type of religious dance performed in honour of the goddess Bhavani. The *Gondhalis* are the worshippers of Tulja-Bhavani of Tuljapur, a village near Sholapur. They call themselves sons of the goddess. At times they wear high conical caps, red in colour, and long white *angarkha* or coat. A piece of white or red cloth is worn as a belt. *Gondhalis* invariably wear a necklace of cowries which become yellow along with the rest of the dress with the *bhandara*, the yellow powder sprinkled by them on their foreheads.

The *Gondhal* is arranged on important occasions such as marriages, feasts, conclusions of religious functions, etc. The members of the household, guests and invitees assemble in a large hall or courtyard. The principal *Gondhali* places a piece of coloured and nicely bordered *khan* (sari-cloth) on a low stool (*chaurang*). Some rice is spread on the cloth and a pitcher full of water (*Kalasha*) is then placed on the rice. A few mango-leaves are arranged in the pot on which is kept a coconut to represent the image of the goddess (*Tak*). The image is worshipped with flowers and scented sandalwood paste, while white camphor, *agarbattis* and incense are burnt before it. The principal *Gondhali* stands

in front of the image with his assistants, one holding an oil torch, another a symbol, the third a tyre and the fourth a pair of cymbals. The *Gondhali* then invites the Gods 'to attend the *Gonahal*'. After the introductory songs, other narrative poems concerning mythological heroes and popular figures in folklore are sung. The whole atmosphere is filled with a devotional or heroic fervour as the case may be. At times the divine spirit enters the body of the *Gondhali* who then answers the queries of the members of the audience. The *Gondhal* continues till dawn when, after concluding prayers, the torch is extinguished in milk or ghee.

Lalit-Tamasha - Lavani

Lalit is instructive entertainment performed on the concluding days of religious festivals. It was also customary to arrange *Lalit* on the last day of a series of *Keertans* or *Bhajan-saptah*. It consists of small pieces, generally monologues; but dialogues between two or three persons are also common. Almost all the social 'types' are represented in *Lalit*. The monologues or dialogues are superficially humorous, sometimes amorous and even palpably obscene, but they contain philosophical thought. Compositions are spoken by the members of the chorus who very often dress and make up in order to achieve proper representation of the character and to add variety to the performance. Songs are sung and music is played between two pieces. Bits of stories from the epics and *Puranas* are acted in the *Lalit*.

It appears probable that the popular mini entertainments among the lower classes of the society were made use of by the Marathi saints for propagating religious and ethical doctrines. Eknath wrote many pieces suitable for *Lalit* which are known to the students of Marathi literature as *Bharuds*. These pieces are meant to be spoken by beggars who wander from village to village and door to door. The philosophy of the Bhagvat cult was spread through this medium, without much organised effort. One of the compositions of Eknath is known by the name of Bhand. This word in Urdu means a mimic who

goes through the streets singing songs and miming.

One of the characters in the *Lalit* is Vasudeva, a very old figure indeed, which must have been as old as the introduction of the Bhagvat cult in Maharashtra. The Vasudeva wears a long white shirt touching the ankles with a belt of red cloth around the waist. He puts on a conical cap and goes on ringing tiny brass bells in the early hours of the morning. He sings songs based on the *Bhagvat purana*.

Tamasha is an Urdu word used in old Marathi to mean bold and heroic deeds. It is also used to denote 'exhibition of objectionable behaviour' or making a show. We are, however, concerned with the musical variety entertainment known as *Tamasha*. The *Gondhalis* or the ballad singers seem to have been giving concerts of *Lavanis* (love songs, literally meaning '*Rachana*', i.e., arrangement), during the Holi festival to the rural population. The bards who composed the *Lavanis* sung in the *Tamasha*, are called *Shahirs*, the earliest mention of whom is found in chronicles written in the 11th century. Ballads dating earlier than the 17th century have, however, not been recovered from *Gondhalis* and singers. The earliest specimen of a ballad refers to the early part of the 17th century. The famous composers of Marathi *Lavanis* belong to the latter half of Peshwa rule when the *Lavani* had reached the zenith of its achievement.

Lavani is a type of lyrical composition sung in various *Ragas*. The principal theme for *Lavani* is love, sometime illegitimate love; but other subjects-heroic, pathetic, devotional and philosophy, are not ruled out. In fact, half of the *Lavani* compositions are based on subjects other than love. Dialogues in verse form were introduced in some philosophical compositions. The love songs are based on the Radha-Krishna theme which is as old as the *Saptashati* of Hala (2nd century A.D.). The music of *Lavanis* is the result of a blending of north Indian music and Karnatak music. The *Lavanis* used to be sung and are still sung to the accompaniment of Dholki (a drum of

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the *Mridangam* variety), a one-stringed *Tuntune*, and cymbals. Later on a four-stringed *Tambori* and *Daf* (flat drum) were introduced, and these helped to alter the nature of the musical compositions which came to be known as *Baithakichi Lavani* meaning *Lavani* suitable for concerts.

Lavani singing was being developed for many years before it reached its present form during the latter half of the 18th century under the patronage of Bajirao II. Dnyaneshwar seems to be referring to this form of entertainment in chapter XVII (verses 294-300) of the *Dnyaneshwari* when he records that gamblers and such other sorts enjoy songs and dances in the evening and squander money over entertainment. The *Tamasha* performance of *Lavani* singing and allied dramatic representations begins with introductory songs called *Gana*, when two female characters dance behind the curtain with their back to the audience with veils covering their faces. The *Gana* is followed by *Gavalan* songs based on the life of Krishna in Gokul and his amorous pranks. While introducing these songs one of the members of the party, called *Songadya*, acts as Krishna and the others as his friends. They enter into interesting conversation with the female dancers who pose as the milkmaids going to Mathura to sell milk, butter and curds. The dialogues end with the beginning of the *Lavani* songs by the dancers with appropriate gesticulation and movements, while the others accompany.

Some of the *Lavani* compositions are in the form of dialogues sung as such by two or more persons. In the philosophical composition, there are two types of songs. One is sung by a group called *Kalagi*, identified with the Goddess Shakti expounding the Maya doctrine, and the other is called *Tura*, identified with God Shiva, interpreting *Nirgun Brahma*. These groups invariably enter into heated discussions on philosophical matters. The bulk of the popular *Lavani* compositions, however, exploit the sensual and erotic aspect of life. In the *Tamasha* the principal attraction in the third part the *Lavani* singing proper (called

Sangeet Bari), is presented after the *Gana* and *Gavalan* singing.

Shaheer Parshuram is credited with the introduction of the 'actor' in the *Tamasha*. His own actor was Bhavani Teli, a skilled mimic. The actor and the other members of the *Tamasha* troupe, one of them having a high soprano voice, extemporise the meaning of the song and please their rustic patrons by clever impromptu repartee. The comic portion of the *Tamasha* is usually composed of farcial episodes introduced in between two songs when the dancers take rest. The episodes are usually taken from mundane life.

As the *Tamasha* became popular more and more dialogues were introduced which developed into a dramatic representation called a *Vag*, now an essential (concluding) part of the *Tamasha*. It is a multi-scene play generally dealing with a most common and hackneyed farcial subject. Sometimes it is based on a *puranic* story or a popular story of secular origin. In both cases it is instructive as well as entertaining and a powerful instrument of propaganda. Costumes and make-up are used in the *Vag* as is done in the plays but scenery is totally absent.

Several *Shaheers* have written *Lavanis* during the past 300 years, but few of these compositions have been printed and they mostly belong to five or six well-known poets, viz., Ramjoshi, Honaji, Saganbhau, Prabhakar, Parshuram and Anant Fandi. The last of the *Lavani* composers of the classic tradition was Pathe Bapurao Retharekar who passed away a few years ago.

Puppet-plays seem to have been widely produced in India, particularly in the South during the period when Rajashekhar (10th century) wrote his plays. The popularity of the mechanically operated puppets and also of shadow-plays was increasing with the disappearance of Sanskrit as the spoken language and with the increase in the number of people who were

unable to follow the classical plays in Sanskrit. Neelkantha in his commentary on *Mahabharata* refers to a lent, 'jalamandapika', used by the puppet-players. In the beginning the puppet-plays seem to have been introduced by the natives of the country and later the stories of the epics and puranas of the Aryans were adapted for representation for the benefit of the masses who were unable to understand the epic recitations of the *granthakas*. The fact that puppet-plays and shadow-plays were in existence in Maharashtra during the 13th century is supported by the reference to them in the *Dayaneshwari*, written in 1290 A. D.

Puppet-plays are still performed by the Thakars residing in the former Savantwadi State, particularly the families from Pingoli, a village in Kudal taluk. The Thakars are found to inhabit the mountainous parts of the countryside and are fishermen by profession, fishing in the river waters. They sell wigs, combs, dolls, etc., made from horns. They are believed to have settled in Konkarn and the slopes of Sahyadri 2000 years ago and might have brought the art of exhibiting mechanically operated puppets with them. The troupe of the puppet-players consists of three or four persons. One of them, who is the real *Sutradhara*, the thread-puller, sits inside an

enclosure made of about five to six square feet of cloth stretched on bamboos and meant to serve as four walls. The top is kept open from where the puppets come out and descend. The thread puller operates the puppets from inside, manoeuvring their movements according to the narration of his colleague *Sutradhara* sitting outside.

The play starts with the benedictory song and worship of Ganapati who descends riding on a mouse. After the introduction, mythological stories are acted by the puppets with movements and gestures. The limbs of the puppets are so flexible that they cause no hindrance when the *Sutradhara* makes them dance. *Yama Darbar* (the Hall of Death), for the punishment inflicted after death to wicked and sinful persons, forms an important part of these performances and is always in demand. Culprits who wrong society and disregard social and religious codes are produced before *Yama* for trial and punishment.

The shadow-plays are also put on by the strolling Thakars. The puppet-plays are popular in the villages throughout Maharashtra and part of the Kannada-speaking areas including Hubli, Gadag and their surroundings.

APPEAL

Four Volumes in the "GARLAND" series titled *A Garland, Another Garland, Yet Another Garland & The Fragrant Garland* are before the music-loving public. Readers of SHANMUKHA would have perused the gracious reviews of the books by the Editor. It is my desire to wind up the 'GARLAND' series of Biographical Dictionary of Carnatic Composers, Musicians with the fifth and the last of the series. I shall be grateful if Vidwans and Vidushis of standing and musicologists help with full bio-data, special comments, anecdotes and achievements and join the non-commercial Yagna. Those whose lives had been included already may peruse the contents in the four books & suggest additions worthy of being passed on to music-loving public & posterity.

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